ATLUS
UDON
SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV
Official Artworks

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV:
Official Artworks

石田栄司

Eiji Ishida

The art director for a number of Atlus titles. Ishida's most well-known work, "Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey", was also the first one he directed. As the art director for "Shin Megami Tensei IV", he supervised the game's design, graphics, and animation.

Shin Megami Tensei Ⅳ: Official Artworks

土居政之

Masayuki Doi

Since he began working on concept art for Atlus titles, Doi has served as an art director and character designer. For this game, he was selected to take on the latter role. The many character and key illustrations he has done have won him praise both at home and overseas.

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WORLDS

All the Worlds of Shin Megami Tensei IV

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EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

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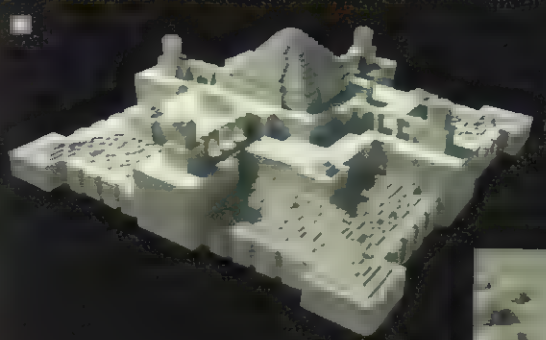
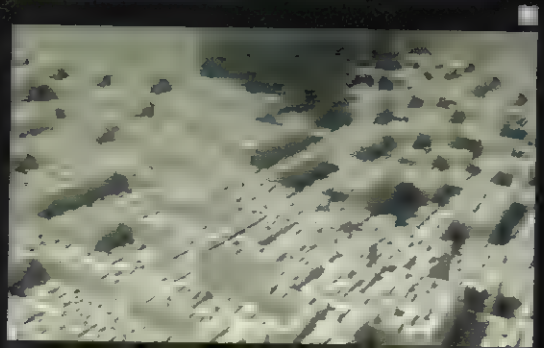




KINGDOM OF MIKADO: FULL VIEW 01

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

■ Eastern Kingdom of Mikado: Full view
■ Lake Mikado
■ Concept art: Hill
■ Kingdom of Mikado: Idea 01
■ Kingdom of Mikado: Idea 02

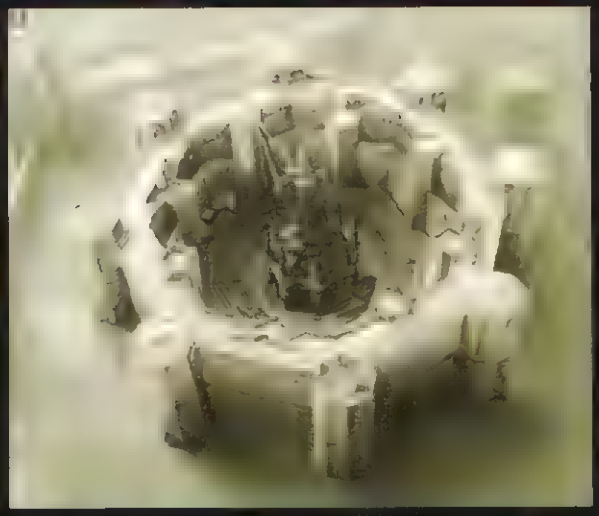
■ was the very first image board we actually finished. But getting there involved a process of trial and error, and the first ideas I came up with were ■ and ■. Nothing about the story or characters had been finalized at that point; we only had some key points and a vague idea about the general worldview. One of those points was that this was a "rebuilt" world, a place rebuilt by the gods in a totalitarian yet rational way. That is what I was emphasizing with ■ and ■. I used a Moroccan motif, but with pure white buildings and those pyramid structures. But when I showed it to Kaneko, he said, "This is looking more like sci-fi than fantasy. You're thinking about this design too hard. In this version, it's clear that this place has something to hide, but you don't want the players to be that prejudiced right from the start. So less contrived, more traditional fantasy?" So I left ■ and ■ on the drawing board. (laughs) ■ came from the scenery art people. Referencing Spain's Toledo and France's Carcassonne, they reworked it into the sort of medieval fortress town we were imagining. We already knew we wanted to have the social hierarchy represented by physically distinct living districts, so I put in that request as well. In the end we got ■, which is the stereotypical, clearly medieval town everyone was hoping for. When Kaneko saw it, he said, "Yup. More like this, for sure." (laughs) We didn't worry too much about it after that image board was finished, as the general image started coming together more and more.

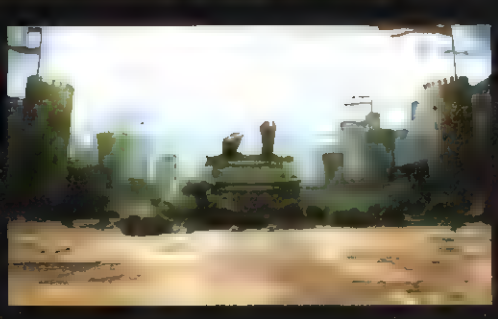
MIKADO CASTLE 02

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

- [redacted] Concept art: Full view from the roof of Mikado Castle
- [redacted] Concept art: Mikado Castle exterior
- [redacted] Mikado Castle roof
- [redacted] Mikado Castle roof (night)
- [redacted] Mikado Castle roof (Kiccigiorgi aflame)

From the start, we knew that Mikado Castle would be at the center of this world, and [redacted] and [redacted] were early image boards showing that. Between the two, I think [redacted] came first. [redacted] has these sort of alarming, almost pastoral structures that feel far removed from battle and war. During the process, though, we decided that Mikado Castle should be built for battle, so [redacted] transformed into the more battle-hardened looking [redacted]. The whole place is a fortress town, so of course there has to be fighting of some sort going on, but the people within the Kingdom of Mikado don't fight amongst themselves. The stronghold isn't meant to protect from outside attacks either, though; rather, it's there to contain the demons that emerge from Naraku. Way back when, demons were threatening the people, so the castle structure was built to seal them up. Settlements then sprang up around the castle. But why settle in such a dangerous place!? Go live somewhere safer! (laughs) At one point in the game, Walter stands on the roof and says something along the lines of "We can look down on everything from here!" The implication is that one can see everything from atop Mikado Castle. All can be overseen and controlled. That was a secondary theme of the location. We had two scenery artists, but the one in charge of Mikado Castle is fond of the Middle Ages, so he caught on quickly (laughs).





AQUILA STATUE PLAZA 03

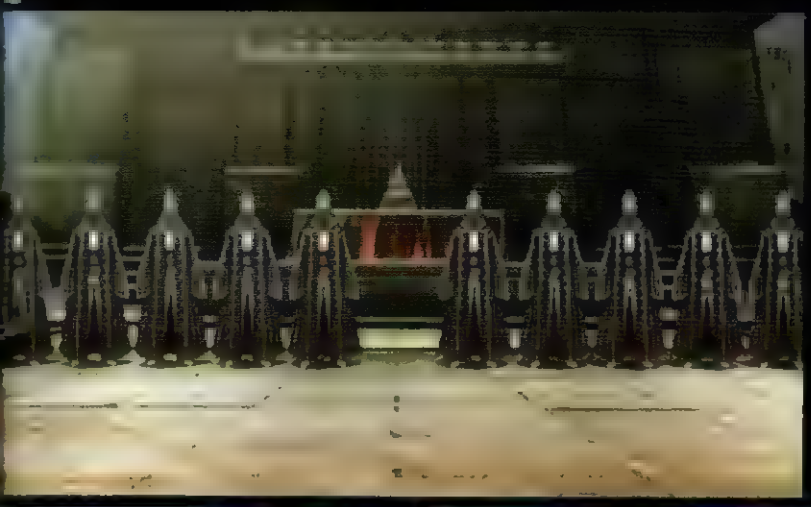
EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

■ Aquila Statue Plaza
■ Concept art: Aquila Statue Plaza
■ Concept art: Aquila Statue Plaza full view
■ Aquila Statue Plaza: Gauntlet Rite
■ Aquila Statue Plaza: Statue destroyed
■ Aquila Statue Plaza: Statue destroyed
■ Aquila Statue Plaza (night)

You'll notice that the arrow slits on the walls in ■ face inward. That's just one striking piece of evidence to show that Mikado Castle was built as a structure to contain demons. We tried to incorporate lots of little details like this, but in the end, the Nintendo 3DS's low screen resolution meant that most of it just got blurred out. So we cut out those things, and they don't appear in the game. (laughs)

As for the plaza itself, the theme was "several layers of defensive walls to keep the demons contained", and you can see evidence of that in ■.

The Aquila statue design also went through a few phases. At first we had this clear-cut hero-looking guy (in ■ and ■), but Kaneko said, "Make him look more like the Academy Awards Oscar statue. More abstract, you know? It's just too hackneyed as it is now." (laughs) His suggestion definitely jived with the surrealist, totalitarian image of the whole place, so that's the direction we went in. We also made the pose stronger and more evocative of an Olympic athlete! (laughs) I personally think this was the right way to go, but as for some of the other team members... Their opinions on the matter are a mystery to this day. Fundamentally, I'm not someone who tends to be receptive to the opinions and impressions of others. (laughs)



Gauntlet Rite
Concept art: Gauntlet Rite
Concept art: Village people watching the Gauntlet Rite

This is also some really early concept art. At first, the Gauntlet Rite was going to take place at the feudal lord's mansion... like in a small government office. A town hall-like place. The protagonist is from Kiccigiorgi, so [redacted] and [redacted] don't necessarily have to be taking place in Mikado Castle. The rite could have taken place at that lord's mansion in a city like Musashino, as a sort of performance/attraction at a summer festival. Envious of the chosen samurai, the village people might boo and jeer, as if at Cinderella when it's discovered that the glass slipper fits. The idea was to capture a certain pastoral, fairy tale-like quality.

GAUNTLET RITE 04

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

PROTAGONIST'S QUARTERS

05

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

■ Protagonist's Quarters
■ Concept art: Protagonist's Quarters

Except in extraordinary circumstances, there's no way every samurai would get his/her own room, right? So naturally the grunts would share a common room. That's the concept shown in ■. But the room also had to serve as a sort of rest area, and that consideration toward the gameplay led to giving the protagonist his own room. Personally, I think it's crazy to give a newcomer his own room! You have to ask yourself - how many rooms are there in Mikado Castle, anyway!? (laughs) The characters drawn here are the protagonist, Jonathan, and Walter... or their predecessors, at any rate. That is to say, the protagonist, the law hero, and the chaos hero, all gathered together.

FACILITIES 06

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

1 K's Tavern
2 Concept art: K's Tavern
3 Q's Blacksmith
4 W's Apothecary
5 Terminal

I struggled with how to place and deal with the blackboard in the bar in 1 to the extent that I redid the image three whole times before settling on 1.

Looking back, 1 sure is filled with ruffians. (laughs) The image I had in mind at the time was the good old bars you'd find in lots of classic RPGs. The place where adventurers and ne'er-do-wells alike gather. I was stuck on the idea that our bar should be in the run-down district and filled with bad guys. (laughs)In the end, though, we went with a more refined, exclusive-looking establishment.

As for the Terminal in 5, the Terminals throughout the series have always been something of an homage to science fiction, with some resembling the pods from "The Fly". This time around it's an homage to the original Cerebro room from the first generation of "X-Men". I just happened to be watching "X-Men" when trying to think up a design for the Terminal. I was like, "Ah! This is it!" (laughs) You'll notice a lot of spherical, hexagonal, and fractal designs in the game because I'm rather fond of them. (laughs)

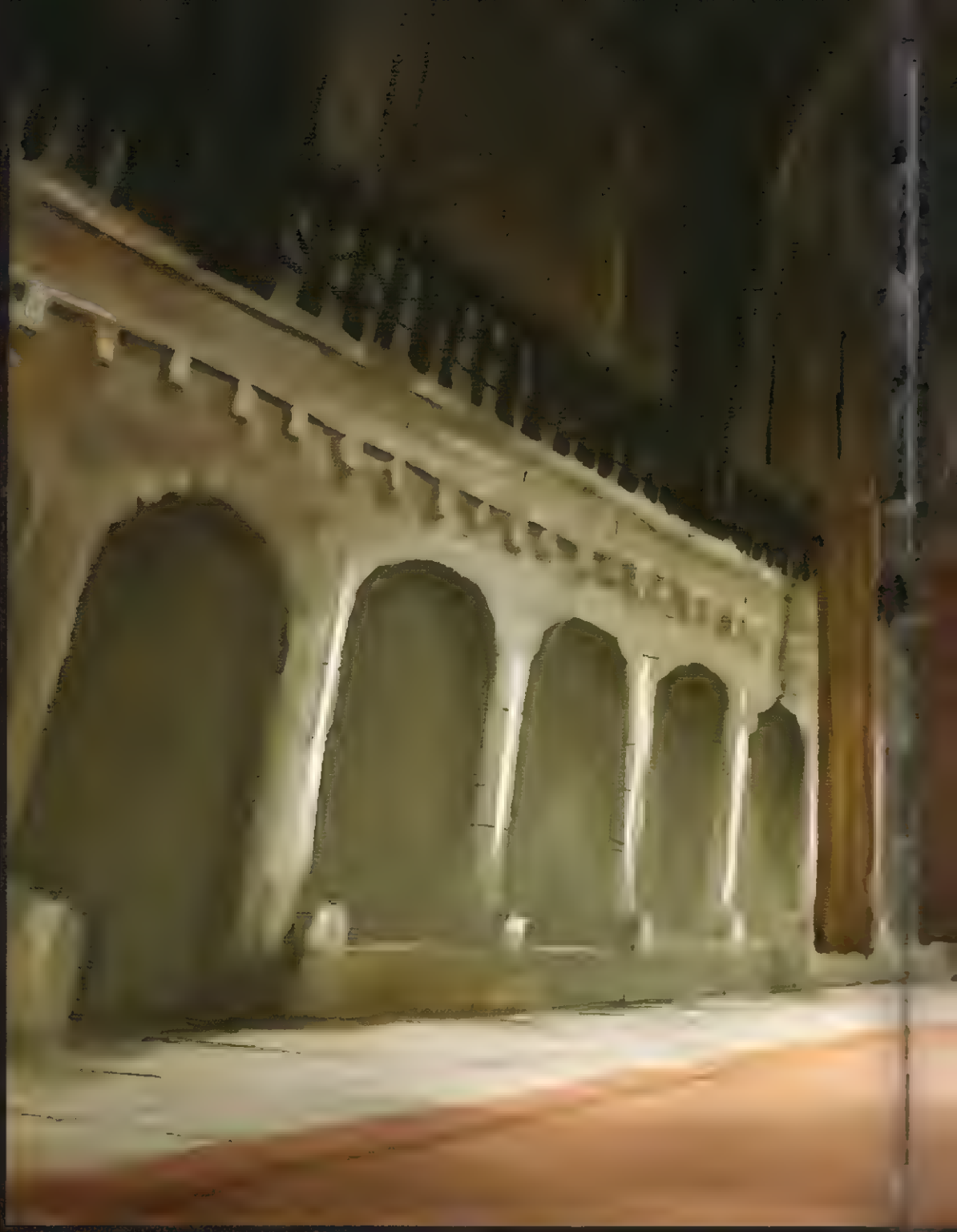
CASTLE INTERIOR 07

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

[redacted] Concept art: Mikado Castle audience room
[redacted] Samurai guardroom
[redacted] Mikado Castle treasure room
[redacted] Obelisk Plaza: Black Samurai execution

The audience room in [redacted] only exists as concept art; it doesn't appear in-game. If you'll allow me to go on a tangent, I'd like to talk about the need for image boards. I don't mean the explicit materials, but rather the variety of illustrated locations and situations that help us firm up the essential images for the game. So there will naturally be unused materials in the end, and this audience room didn't make the cut. For the game's story, we started heading toward the idea that it was really the Monastery that controls things, while the monarchy is more just for decoration, with the king a figurehead. So the king's importance was lessened and the audience room never got a chance to appear in the game. The king barely appears at all, in fact - only in sprite form for Challenge Quests. So we don't even have a formal bust illustration of him. (laughs)

As for Obelisk Plaza in [redacted]... I saw that in the script and thought, "Right, an obelisk. If it's Megami Tensei, there's gotta be obelisks." I just accepted that, and there was no need to dig that deep to come up with a suitable design. (laughs) Since obelisks originally come from Egypt, I personally found it weird that they just happen to exist in this reimagined world. There's something out-of-place about them, no? (laughs)

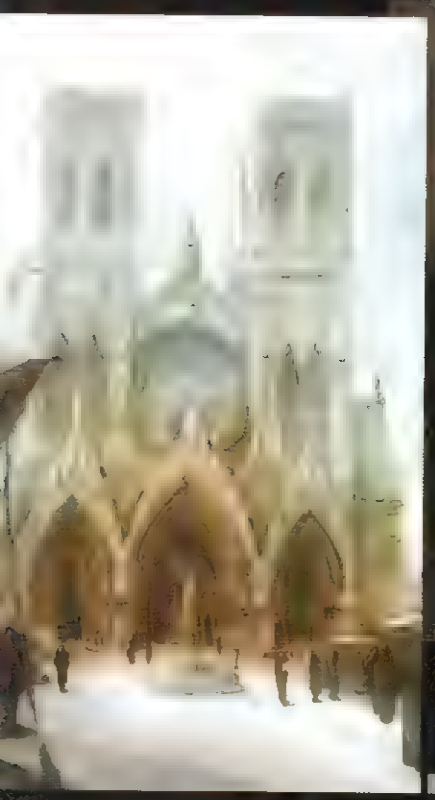


CHURCH
08

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

Concept art: Church interior
Concept art: Church exterior

Like the audience room, the church doesn't appear in-game. These image boards were done really early on, and the church was basically the predecessor to the Monastery. These church versions were made with the idea that, in a world reworked by angels, the angels would obviously form a religion centered around their own worship, and with that, facilities for that worship. The "monastery" keyword was being talked about at the time, but it didn't yet house the harsh organization it eventually would. Rather, it was a warm and inviting place where people could go and actively practice their faith. Although this pure religion would eventually become corrupted by political influence leading to the current monastery - we can imagine that these church image boards show what the religion was like long ago in the in-game world.

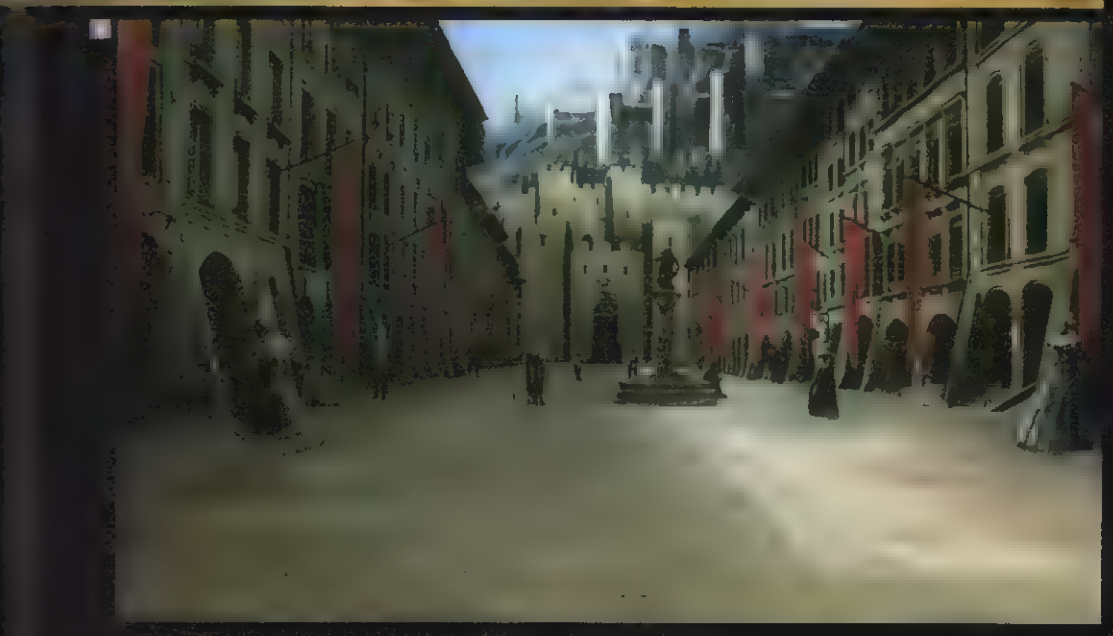


MONASTERY 09

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

- Concept art: Monastery interior
- Concept art: Monastery exterior
- Concept art: Monastery interior 2
- Monastery
- Concept art: Hugo's office

Compared to the warm church on the previous page, the current Monastery was made a much colder place with something off about it in order to fit the story. Medieval monasteries in real life studied religion, of course, but on the side they also researched government, wine-brewing, and other things. The Monastery in the game takes that concept to the next level. The members are more interested in researching relics than religion. That said, despite the lack of warmth, all the members are not necessarily like Hugo. Some are there researching for the good of the people, I think. As such, design-wise, we didn't go with "Monastery = evil". We intentionally placed a lot of odd artifacts in the Monastery that don't really mesh with the rest of Mikado. There are plenty of vehicles, but I wonder if we should have included more weapons? The idea is that these things were recovered from the Unclean Ones' lower living districts.



LUXUROR QUARTER 10

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

- Concept art: Luxuror Quarter
- Luxuror District 1
- Luxuror District 1 (empty)
- Luxuror District 2

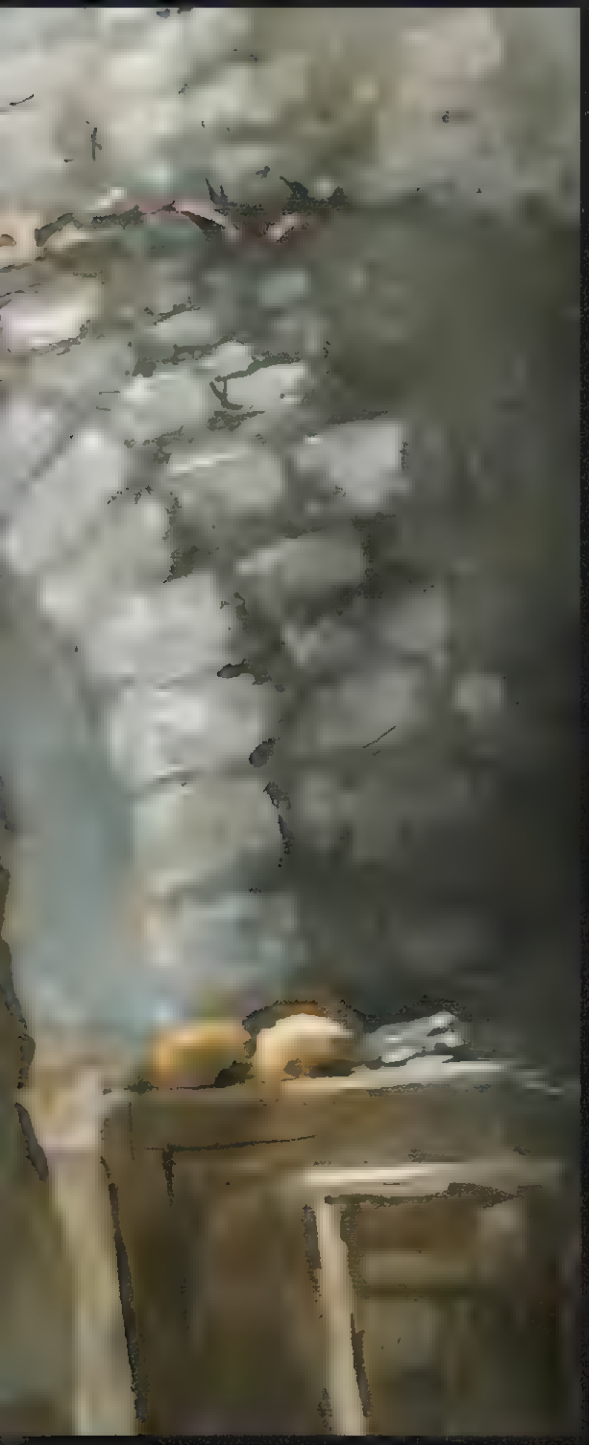
The Luxuror Quarter's modern look is meant to show the stark difference between the respective statuses of its residents and those of the Casualry Quarter. The Luxurors are comprised of people who work in the castle and their families, and they can be seen as the nobles of this world. But what exactly defines a noble? The image I have is of people who live in Den-en-chofu. (laughs) In order to show this distinct sense of inequality in a world that preaches equality, we made the Luxuror Quarter look just luxurious enough without too much ostentatious decoration. If we had gotten too creative with the design here, the proper juxtaposition with the Casualry Quarter would be lost. Making it look like an actual town you might see somewhere in Europe was an easy way to preserve that theme. The aforementioned ostentatious decorations would also be a way to show that, but the goal wasn't to make the Luxurors appear evil, necessarily. They're simply born into that position and accept it without question. They're not malicious. It's all part of a tradition that's been going on for a long time, so it wouldn't do to have them seem evil.

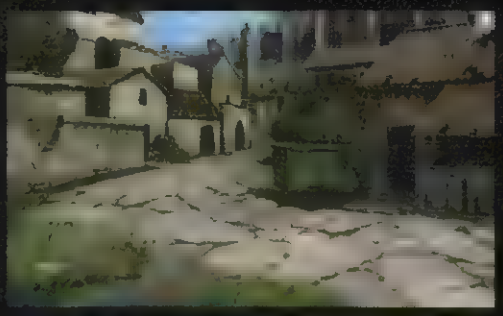
CASUALRY QUARTER 11

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

Concept art: Casualry Quarter (1)
Concept art: Casualry Quarter (2)

While the Luxurors generally travel by carriage, the Casualries are pretty much always on foot. That was a key factor in designing the Casualry Quarter, which has streets that are too narrow for carriages, lots of little alleys, and a confined, gloomy feel to it. But it's supposed to feel busy and bustling, like a Turkish bazaar. At first, the visuals for the Luxuror and Casualry Quarters were actually reversed. The city's construction would have started in the center, at the castle, and expanded outward like tree rings. The farther out you go, the newer the buildings get. In that sense, what would become the Luxuror Quarter - near the center - would be the "old town", with newly-developed areas surrounding that. But Kaneko complained, saying, "Shouldn't the nobles live closer to the seat of government?" After mulling it over, we incorporated that suggestion. So the Casualry Quarter is on the outside, but mysteriously, the buildings there are old-fashioned. That kind of weird asymmetry is kind of interesting, though, no?



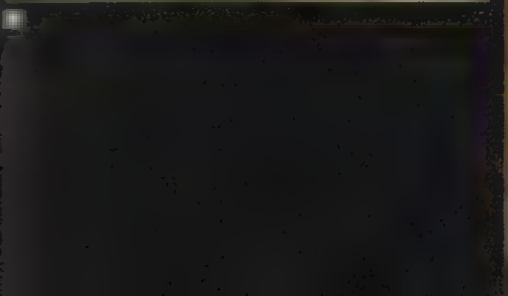


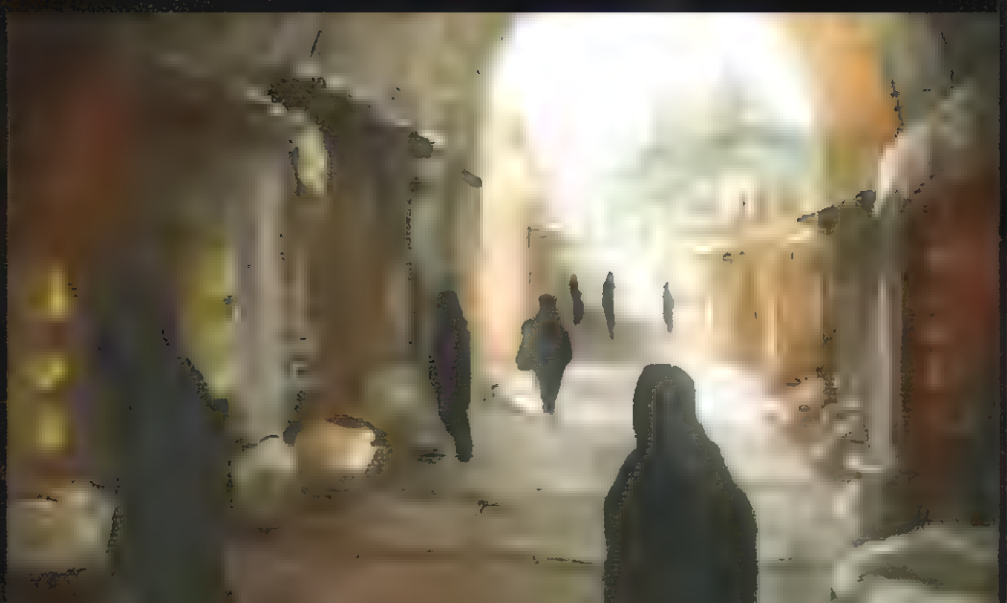
CASUALRY QUARTER

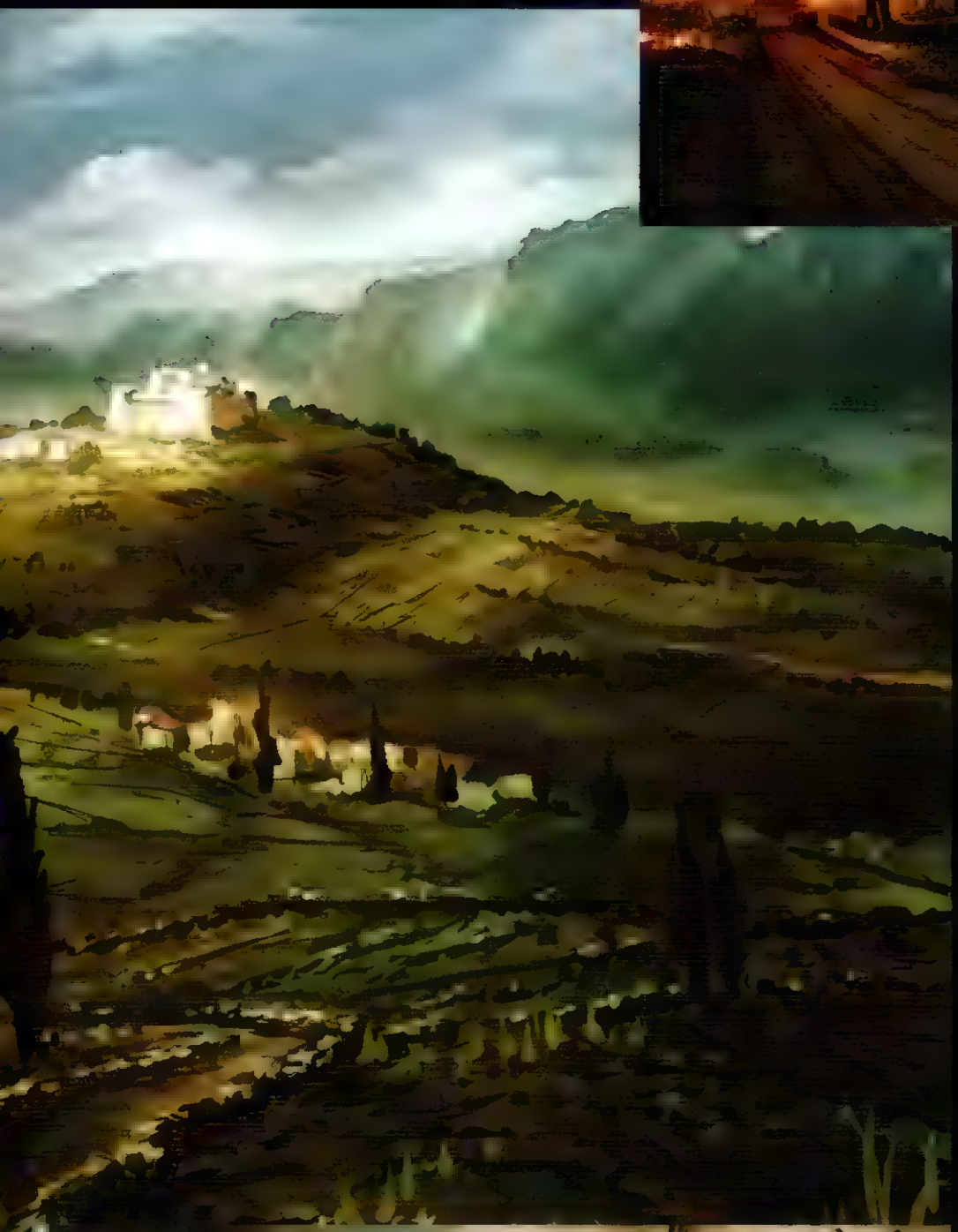
EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

- Concept art: Casualry Quarter bakery
- Concept art: Casualry Quarter (3)
- Concept art: Casualry Quarter (4)
- Casualry District 1
- Casualry District 2
- Casualry District 3 (1)
- Casualry District 3 (2)
- Bakery

As explained on the previous page, [redacted] shows how we originally envisioned the Casualry Quarter. Architecture would evolve over the ages, leading to simple yet modern-looking buildings with a quasi-old-fashioned flair to them. But visually, it doesn't make sense that the Casualries would live in a place like that, though it's hard to tell at a glance. (laughs) The image of the Casualry Quarter we went with has their buildings made of stone instead of brick. Their roofs are thatched and often in disrepair. [redacted] shows the overall position of the Casualries pretty well. That is, they're looking up at the distant Luxuror Quarter.







KICCIGIORGI VILLAGE 12

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

Concept art: Village (1)
Concept art: Village (2)
Kiccigiorgi Village
Concept art: Kiccigiorgi Village, post-attack

Kiccigiorgi Village was planned from the beginning, but as Mikado Castle is the central location in the story, Kiccigiorgi didn't get much priority. It just sort of fell into place. (laughs) Kiccigiorgi is a farming colony, which is why you can see fields in [redacted] and [redacted]. The protagonist's and Issachar's families are farming families, and Walter's is a family of fishermen, but it's not as if they chose those jobs. Rather, they were assigned. There are some, like Issachar, who want to break out of those assigned roles, but they're definitely in the minority. The majority of people accept things as they are and don't try to advance themselves or change jobs. With that in mind, Kiccigiorgi was intentionally designed as a rather bland, stereotypical farming village where nothing has changed for ages.

In the center of [redacted] you can see traces of the lord's mansion mentioned on the Gauntlet Rite page.

KICCIGIORGI FOREST

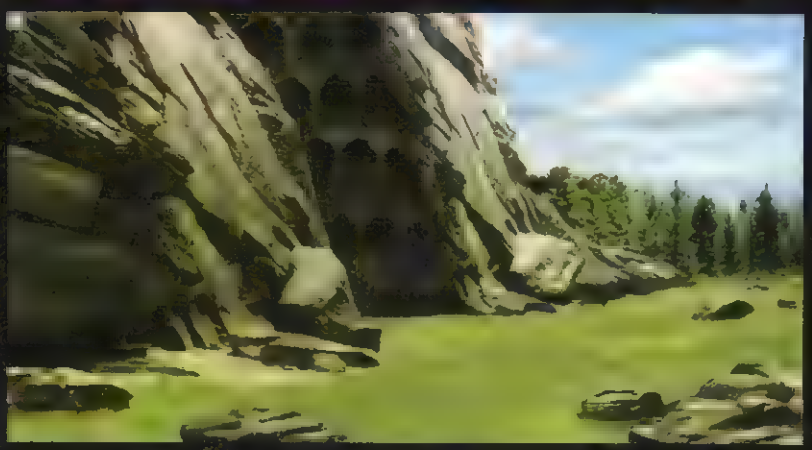
13

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

Kiccigiorgi Forest
Concept art: Black Samurai
Kiccigiorgi Forest entrance

2 shows the Black Samurai attacking Kiccigiorgi Village. Early on, Kaneko told us to include the Black Samurai. I remember thinking, "Huh? Of course we are!" (laughs) We always envisioned the Black Samurai and the Demonica equipment as a set. The original plot from Kaneko had a story about the destruction of the world much like in the actual game - and, a group of Demonica-wearing demon hunters. To the medieval-esque people of Mikado, Demonica would resemble a traditional armor and helmet set, so they naturally call this armored demon summoner the "Black Samurai".

Design-wise, Kiccigiorgi Village and Forest don't really take any inspiration from the real-life Kichijoji, although I might have liked to link the village's architecture to that of some real-world location.

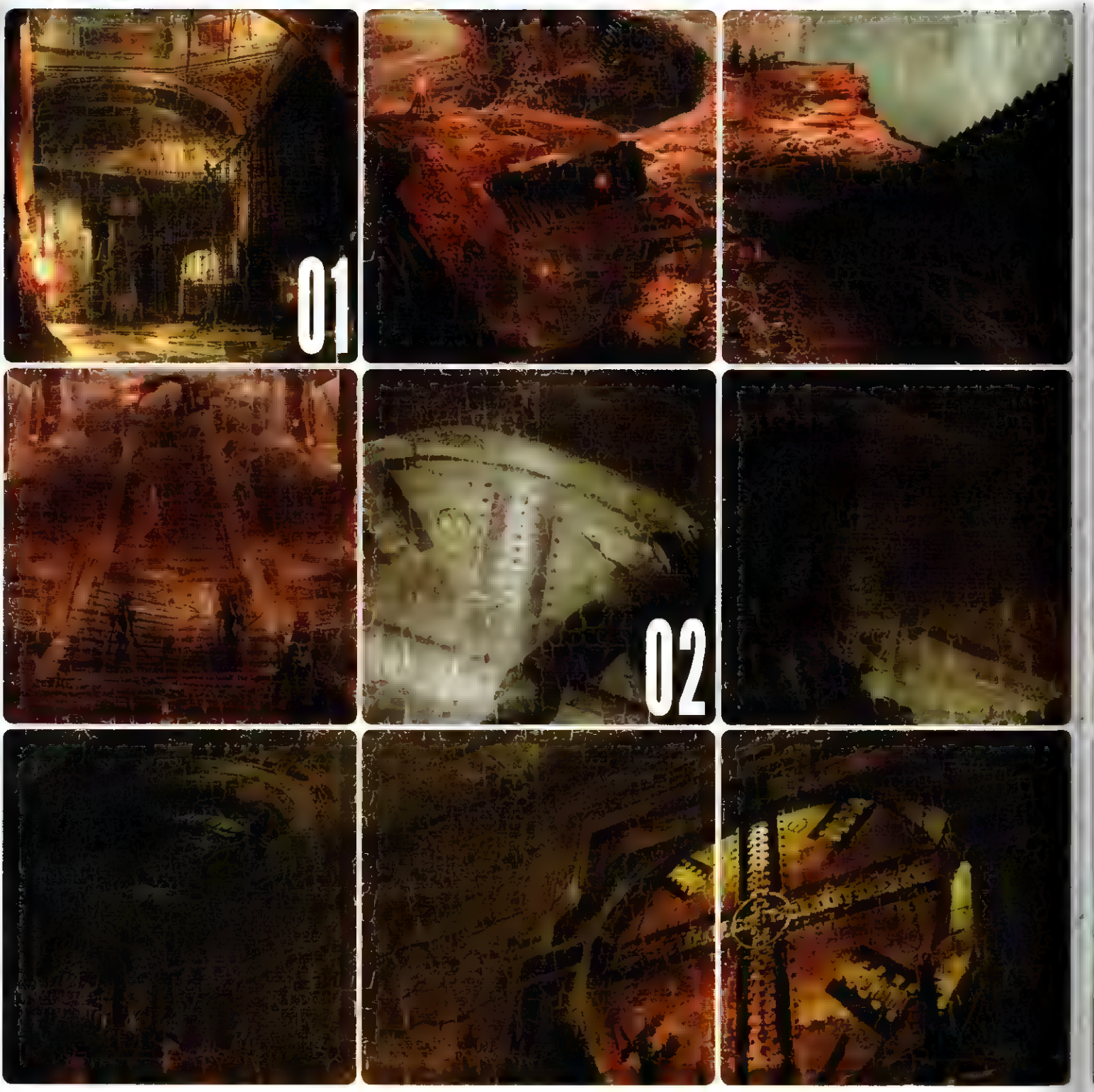


SHENE DUQUE 14

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

■ Shene Duque in the distance
■ Concept art: Cocoon interior
■ Cocoon interior
■ Shene Duque

The cocoon in ■ is the Noah's Ark-like structure into which God placed the pure, chosen children before destroying the world. It's the thing that was in Shinjuku National Park in Tokyo. As for the beehive structure inside, each chosen human was given a cell where their body was strengthened and modified to adapt to the new, post-destruction world. The thing clearly looks like a cocoon, which is kind of freaky. (laughs) Kaneko's plan had the cocoon also holding seeds for plant life, but I couldn't help but wonder how animals were handled. Taking that question to its logical conclusion would result in something that resembled Noah's Ark a little too much, though, so we were careful to avoid that while designing.



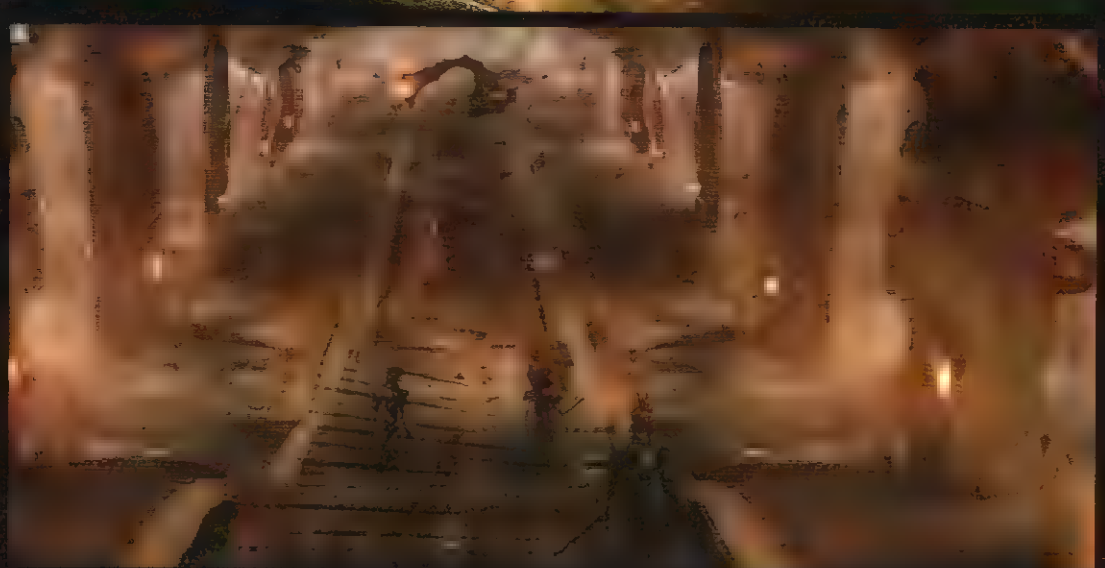
NARAKU

03
04

NARAKU 01

NARAKU

- Concept art: Naraku entrance
- Concept art: Naraku Entrance Plaza (1)
- Concept art: Naraku passage
- Concept art: Samurai Monument
- Concept art: Naraku giant cave
- Concept art: Naraku Entrance Plaza (2)
- Aquila Statue Plaza
- Naraku interior



You'll notice that the image boards on the following pages have a different flavor to them than those of Mikado; that's because we had two different people working on image boards. Broadly speaking, one was in charge of Mikado, while the other did all the rest. There's a bit of crossover, but for the most part, I think you can clearly tell which images came from the artist who specializes in medieval stuff and which ones came from the artist who favors Western games. The latter followed an unusual career path. (laughs) He started out in management at a game company, but quit to study art in America. Then he returned to Japan, where this game was his first job as a game artist.

Naraku was originally going to be made of brick, like the dungeons of the "Wizardry" series. The entrance wouldn't be a spiral staircase, but rather a manual elevator. After all, the Monastery would need an elevator for all the relics they haul up. But Kaneko said, "Naraku is 100% a product of the Unclean Ones' work. The people of Mikado only repair and maintain it. Nothing more than that." So that's how we made it. With that in mind, we tried to keep Naraku from looking too artificial and made it look more like the Unclean Ones gave it all they had to excavate this place. (laughs)

The open space in [redacted] resembles an ordinary limestone cavern in a lot of ways, but Naraku is actually inside Masakado's body, so I put in an order for some organ-like structures. I wish we could have made it look more intestinal, actually.

HALL OF THE MINOTAUR

02

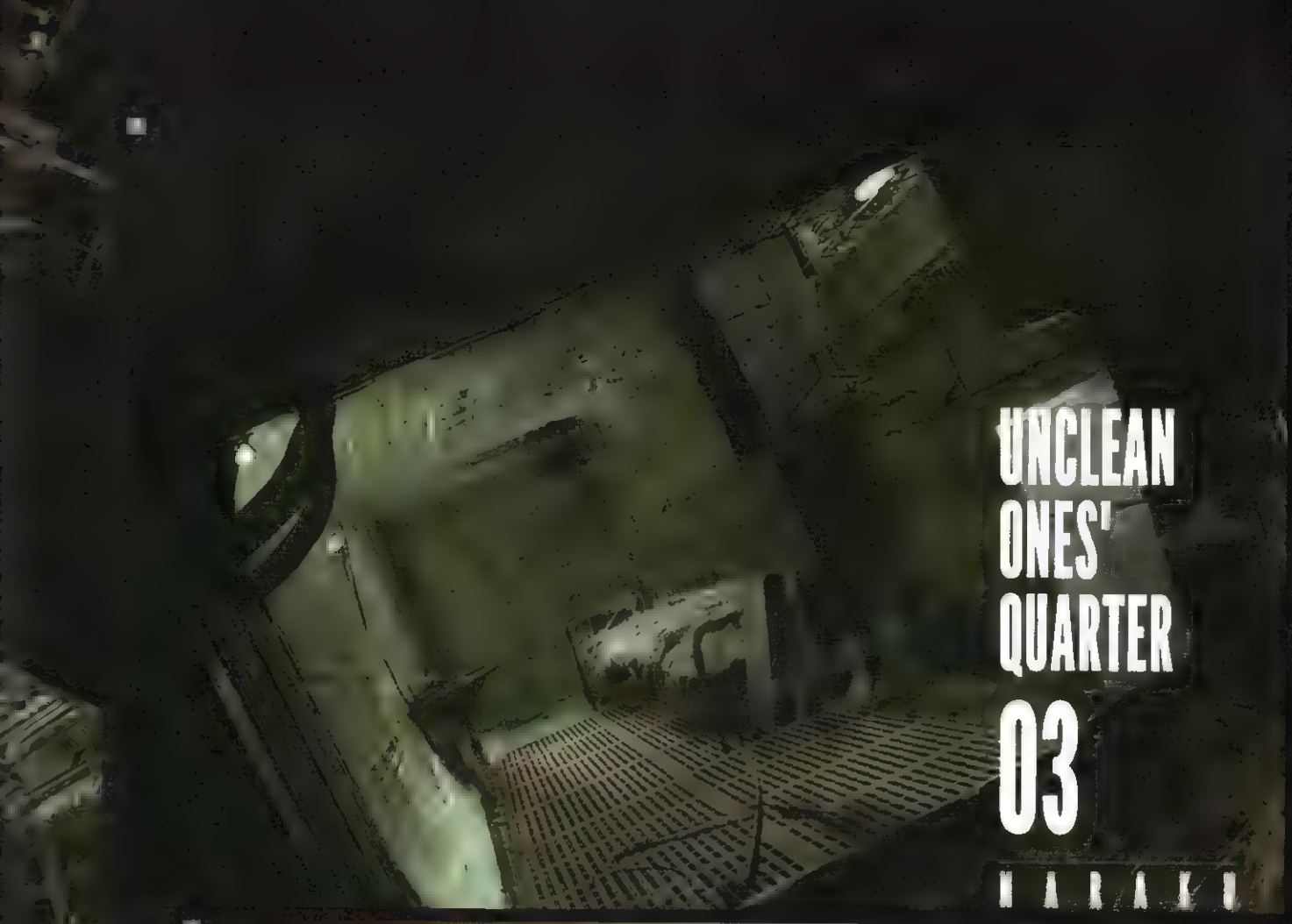
KARAKU

1 Concept art: Hall of the Minotaur (1)
2 Concept art: Hall of the Minotaur (2)
3 Hall of the Minotaur front
4 Hall of the Minotaur

My first thought with the Hall of the Minotaur was... How on Earth do people hauling up relics get past the Minotaur? I mean, really? (laughs)

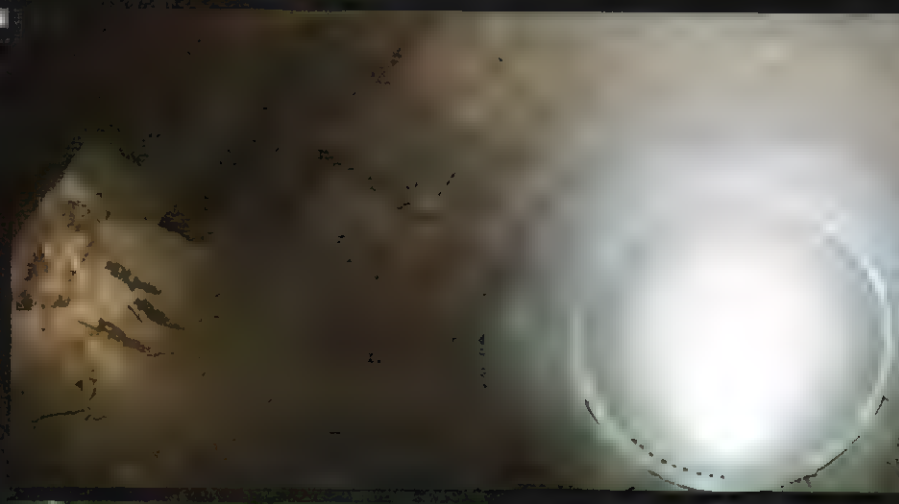
Anyway, from the very start, we knew this would be a gate guarded by the Minotaur, and by passing through it, one would shift to a more modern era. So I thought, "Why not make the tunnel-boring shield itself into the gate?" 1 and 2 show that idea. Everyone asked, "But how would they get it there in the first place?" I said that they probably used demons, but I wasn't convincing enough, and the idea was rejected. (laughs) In retrospect, I guess using the tunnel shield like that would have been too sci-fi, and I think Kaneko was on the money when he said, "We want the biggest shocker to be the reveal of the Sky Tower. Show the tunnel shield here and you'll preempt that surprise." I have a tendency to throw all my ideas into play immediately, so it's good that I had Kaneko to calm me down and balance everything out.

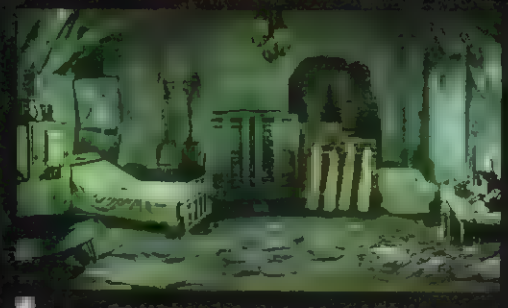
Unlike in the game, 3 shows the Minotaur in front of the gate. But that was a result of my own misconception. (laughs) I figured that a gatekeeper would generally be standing in front of the gate he's guarding. That's what gatekeepers do, right!? You're telling me you only meet him once you pass through the gate!? (laughs)



UNCLEAN ONES' QUARTER 03

NARAKU





...on the idea of the Unclean ...up through Naraku with a ...field on the Minotaur page. ...d to these image boards, where ...ers are vaguely cylindrical, ...tunnels. In the game, the ...gate symbolizes a sort of ...rder, and after passing through and descending a ladder, your surroundings start to look more modern. Personally, though, I wish the visuals could have changed much more drastically and dramatically the instant you pass through the gate. To be honest... this is one area where I'm not entirely satisfied with the work we did. (laughs)

Even though Naraku was dug out with machines, the workers were boring straight up, and the considerable distance they had to go would mean they must have needed to stop and sleep at some point. That's why we have the Unclean Ones' Quarter. Story-wise, I wanted to show how the Unclean Ones made it this far with machines, but ran out of resources and energy at this point and had to go on digging with manpower alone. One can imagine that some of the workers must have given up, fought with each other, died in accidents, and experienced all sorts of traumas down here. (laughs)

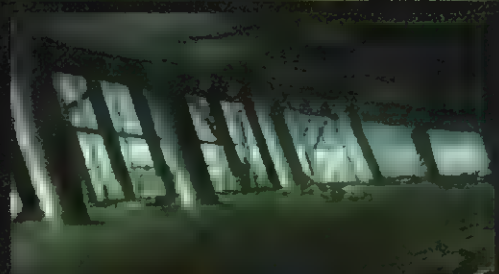
SKY TOWER

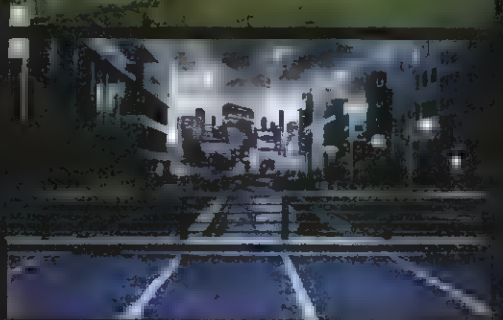
04

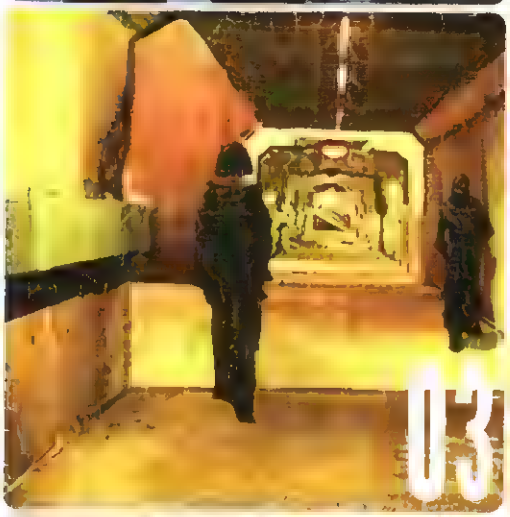
NARAKU

- Concept art: Sky Tower (1)
- Sky Tower: Interior
- Sky Tower: Interior
- Sky Tower: Entrance
- Sky Tower: Front
- Concept art: Sky Tower (2)

There are a lot of hints during the descent down Naraku, so I think most players have a good idea of what sort of place they're going to discover at the bottom. But the point of the Sky Tower was to give people a shock when, unimaginably, after that long descent, they suddenly appear in such a seemingly high place. The new Tokyo Skytree was the talk of the town during the game's development, and it was clearly the motif used here. The real-life one in Minato has its charm, but if we're going with the style of the times, I prefer ours. You can see the transformative effects of Medusa's evil barrier both inside and out, but there are still visible traces of the underlying architecture. I suspect the evil barrier's prevalence is due to Medusa being encamped here for so long - why else would Sky Tower serve as such a high difficulty barrier compared to other dungeons? (laughs)







TOKYO
東京

07

08

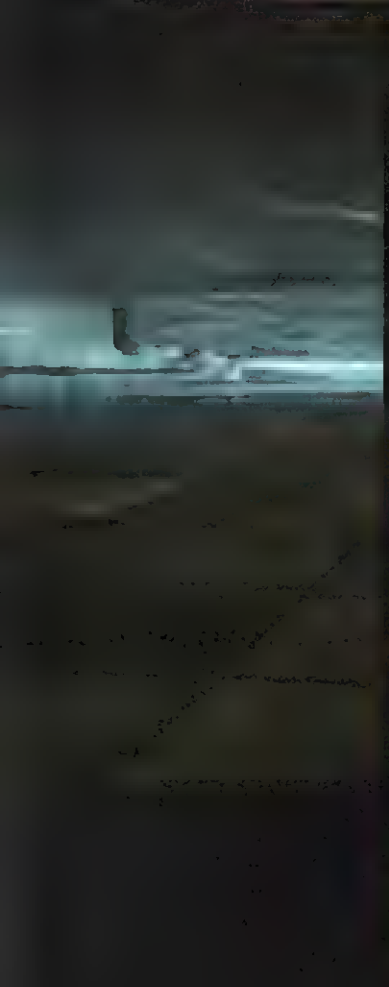
09

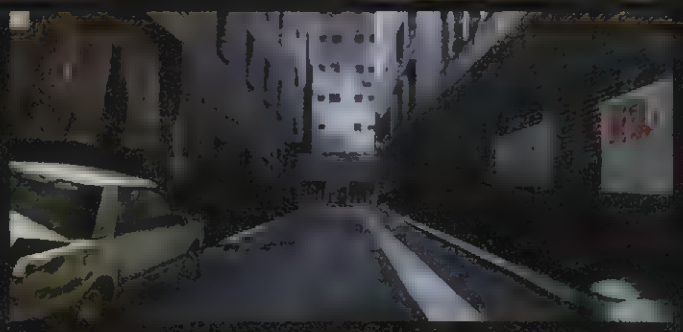
10

11

12

TOKYO 01





TOKYO

1. Concept art: Tokyo
2. Riverbank
3. Generic stadium
4. Generic interior
5. Generic alleyway
6. Generic road
7. Generic roof

In this game, we have the yang of the yin-yang as white and the yin as black. Roughly speaking, the Kingdom of Mikado, bathed in sunlight, is the white yang, while the demon-infested, sunless Tokyo is the black yin. That said, both Mikado and Tokyo are of the "law" alignment. Tokyo may be shrouded in darkness, but Toyama's laws preserve a sense of order. The common theme in both locations is that a minority must be burdened in order to protect the majority. The goal was to get players to think, "Light and dark... They're both the same!?"

When designing Tokyo, we were careful not to make it look too destroyed. In the story, Toyama enacted the laws to preserve order before the city was completely destroyed, so the citizens were able to keep on living. In other words, chaos reigned for years before Toyama's advent, but the city survived... and the current laws keep damage to a minimum. That's the concept we went with for Tokyo. It's for that reason that we didn't have crumbling buildings sticking out of the ground, although that would have been an easy and overt way to get the point across both visually and emotionally. That direction was also taken in light of the prevalence of games with ruined, post-apocalyptic worlds nowadays. That said, I personally love it when you have fallen buildings sticking out at weird angles so you can crawl up the sides. (laughs)

DOWNTOWN 02

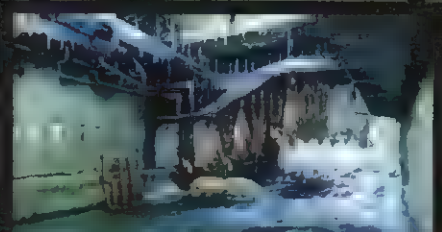
TOKYO

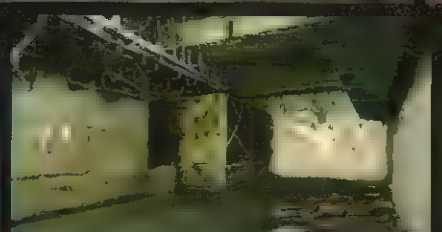
[redacted] Concept art: Tokyo streets
[redacted] Concept art: Tokyo underground shelter
[redacted] Tokyo underground market
[redacted] Human flesh storehouse
[redacted] Generic interior
[redacted] Generic interior

[redacted] is the image board debut of the artist with the colorful career history I mentioned in the Nanaku section. (laughs) At the time, I didn't know that the underground world would be lawful; I thought upstairs would be law while downstairs was chaos. A stable, static society aboveground; an energetic world of chaos below. So I thought we'd have people swaggering about the streets and visiting stalls that are selling who-knows-what-kind of demon meat. (laughs) There'd be a lot of varied activity going on, like in the post-war black market, which is what you see in [redacted]. It wasn't until later that we decided to have the people of Tokyo living underground. [redacted] never made it into the game, but that same sense of energy and vitality was inherited by the underground market area. The images with no roof - where the sky can be seen - came about because I couldn't wrap my head around the idea of making a dark, soulless world from a technical standpoint. (laughs)

Kaneko saw [redacted] and said, "Sorry, sorry, but this isn't it." So we went back to the drawing board, came up with [redacted], and then it was, "No, the people shouldn't be prisoners." So then we came up with [redacted]. With the underground Tokyo in this game, we wanted to emphasize that chaotic vitality, and that's exactly what the open-air market does, with its scattered food shops and seated vendors.

PACHINKO
PACHINKO



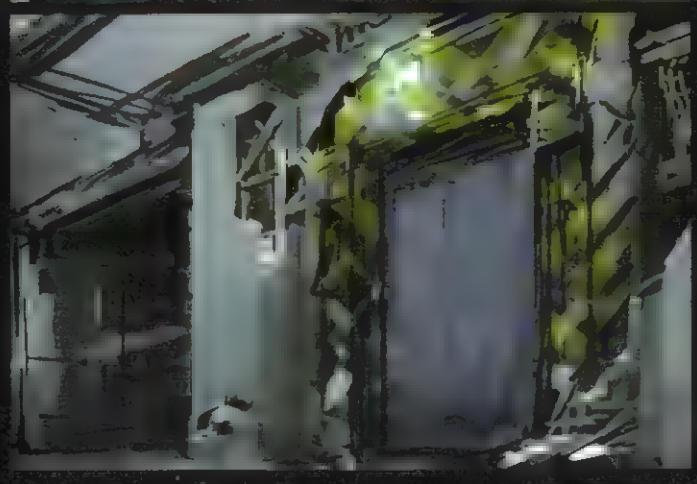


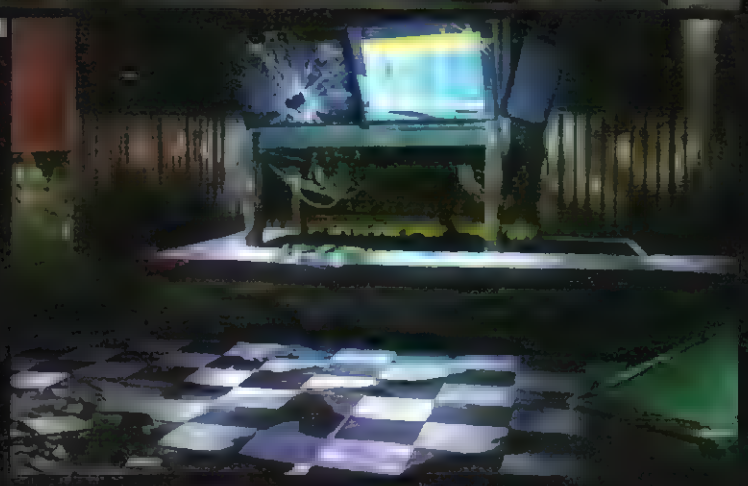
Concept art: Underground passages
Concept art: Underground passages
Concept art: Underground passages

through were test images meant to capture the feel of the people living underground. We can imagine that the art of garment-making has died out (and the materials necessary for it have run dry), so people just throw together patchwork outfits out of whatever they can find. I wanted to exemplify the resulting bizarre fashion sense, which is why you see non-school-age women wearing sailor uniforms and other weird things like that... However, the lesson we learned here is that if you start deviating from the world we know too much, you end up with science fiction. (laughs) What do I mean? Well, the background of could very well be a location straight out of Shinjuku, but add in the weird fashion and all of a sudden you've left Shinjuku. Same with . Add the suit with the visor and the gun and everything starts to look too unfamiliar and very sci-fi. These three images are proof that a simple change in fashion design can make one doubt that these characters belong in Tokyo. Such a change can even make you doubt whether this is Tokyo at all.

UNDERGROUND PASSAGES 03

TOKYO





UNDERGROUND FACILITIES 04

TOKYO

- Concept art: Tool shop
- Tool shop
- Concept art: Terminal surrounding
- Concept art: Terminal exterior
- Weapon shop
- Concept art: Outlaw Hunter Association entrance
- Hunter Association

The shops in [redacted] and [redacted] are like kiosks. The wire netting is showing that the world's gone to hell, and with it, any sense of safety.

The weapon shop owner in [redacted] was originally a greasy-looking fat man, but that felt too contrived, so we slimmed him down. In the end, we gave him a camouflage outfit and made him clever-looking... kind of like Rye Kase in the movie "Outrage".

In the image board for the Hunter Association, [redacted], the graffiti was drawn to catch the eye. I thought it would be fitting and cool to have this group of nomads mark their shifting headquarters with spray paint. The interior of their base wound up looking rather fixed, which made me wonder how these guys move around at all. (laughs) Hunters are basically the kabukimono [roving gangs of ex-samurai] of this world. They live by their own rules. They're mischievous, but also distinctly anti-establishment. I think we got that idea across pretty well.

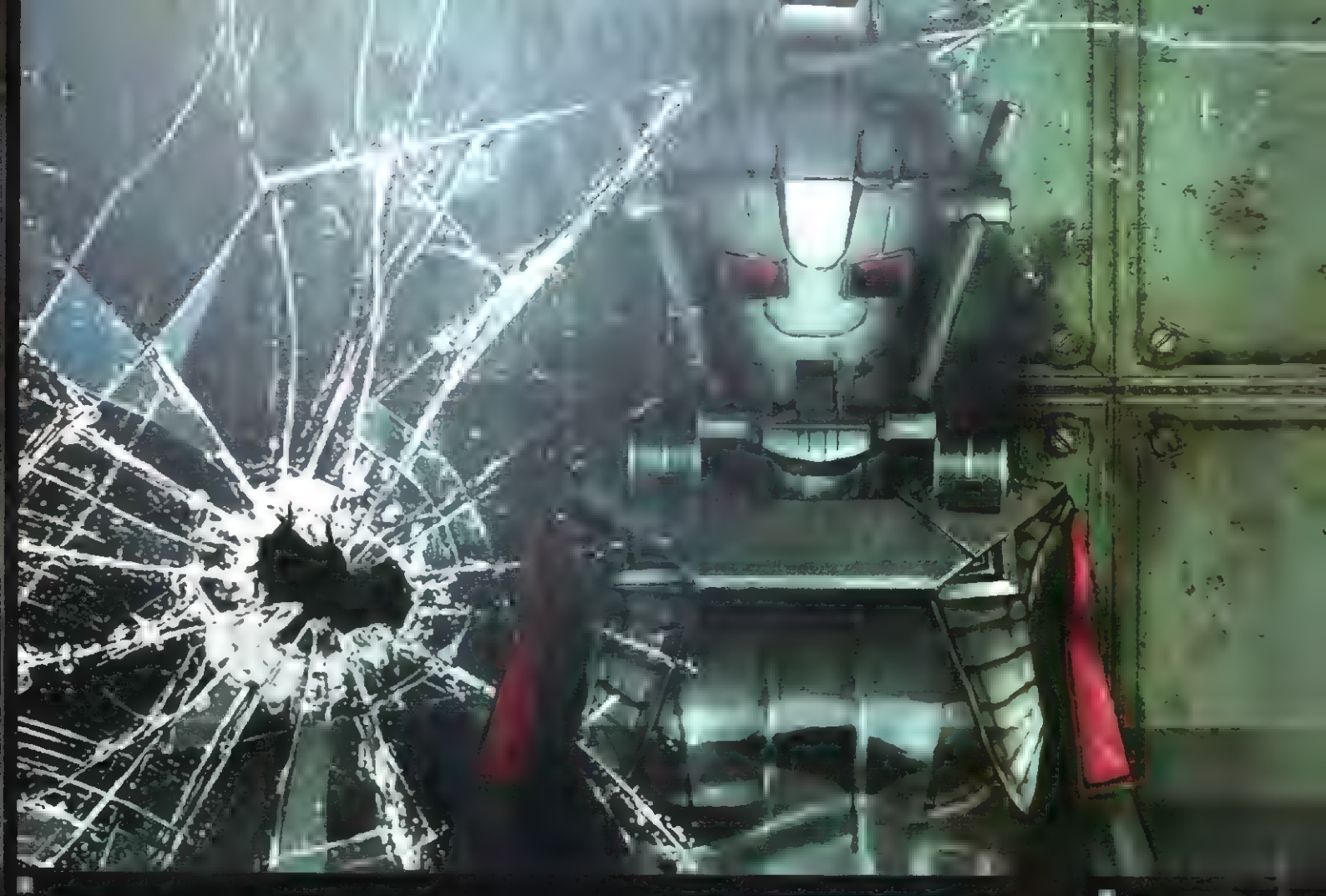
UENO 05

TOKYO

Concept art: Akihabara

This is the image board for Akihabara, which is considered a part of Ueno. But it's actually the revised version. (laughs) We initially had more... colorful versions of the Akiba we all know and love, but there would have been problems if we used these, so they never saw the light of day. Instead, we were mature about it and created this revised version... (laughs)

This is one of the image boards used to paint a picture of the overall city. You've got Akihabara here, then Shibuya and Ginza later on. Sketching out each ward and combining them allowed us to take a step back and look at the balance of Tokyo as a whole. This series was drawn back when we thought the sun might actually get to rise over Tokyo, so that's why Akihabara is illuminated. (laughs) Once we knew the sun wouldn't be seen, I thought, "If we keep Akihabara designed as it is, won't it look too distinct from the other areas?" But in the end, it didn't matter because Akihabara was cut from the story. I never thought Akihabara of all places would get the axe, but it did. (laughs)



CHIYODA 06

T O K Y O

Counter-Demon Force base
Counter-Demon Force base
Counter-Demon Force base
Counter-Demon Force base

This is the Counter-Demon Force base beneath Kasumigaseki in the Chiyoda area. With the Demonary sets in [redacted], I wanted players familiar with "Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey" to think "What are those doing here!?" and those who haven't played that game to think "The Black Samurai!?"

[redacted] shows the destroyed control room. For this room, at first we were going to go with a simple style like the kind you might see in sci-fi movies, but then we thought a clichéd version might work better instead. For the tactical control room, at first we were going to go with a simple style you might see in sci-fi movies, but then we thought a clichéd version might work better instead. So we reworked it, incorporating elements from modern train control rooms, nuclear power plant control rooms, and more. Personally, it pains me to point this out, but the panel in the foreground of the control room here is the same as the one on the bridge of the Red Sprite in "Strange Journey". Yes... it's a self-homage. (laughs)

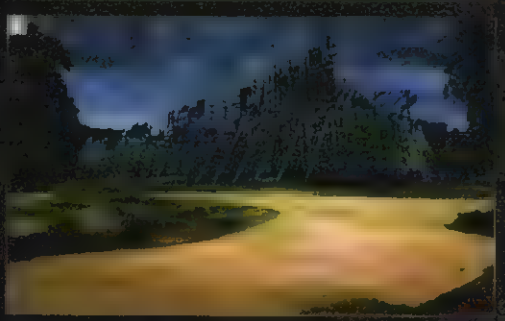
SHINJUKU 07

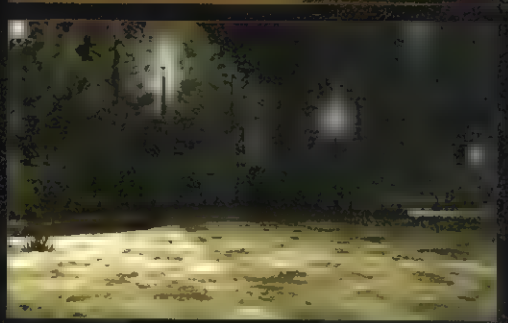
T O K Y O

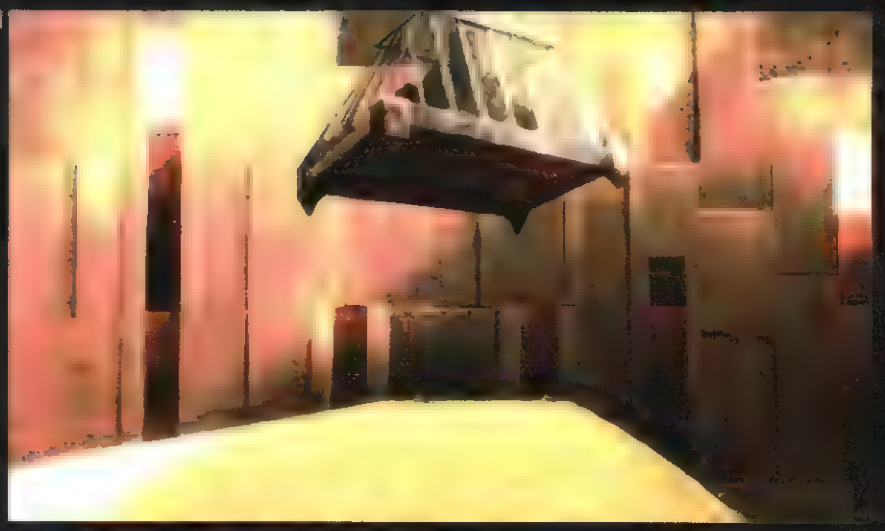
- Concept art: Shinjuku National Park/Cocoon
- Shinjuku south turnstile
- Shinjuku east entrance
- Shinjuku pleasure quarter
- Florida Café
- Shinjuku National Park/Cocoon
- Shinjuku National Park/Cocoon
- Shinjuku National Park
- Kagurazaka Tower
- Concept art: Kagurazaka Tower

[redacted] shows Shinjuku National Park with the cocoon under construction. But people said "Shouldn't it look more like a spaceship?", so we came up with [redacted], whose design has the structure wrapped in what looks like bandages.

Kagurazaka Tower in [redacted] and [redacted] is a building that doesn't really exist in Shinjuku in real life, so we were allowed to have some fun with it design-wise. As I explain in the map design notes for [redacted], I proposed keeping it simple, with the countless slits in the walls pulsing like veins. All that playing around with the design made it look like something straight out of "Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne". The hanging cage in [redacted] made it into the game, but I would have liked to feature the cages in more than just a single shot. I wanted them to be a recurring theme that could be seen as the player walked up the tower and the space opened up into an atrium. On an unrelated note, the huge difference in elevation between the bottom and top of the tower made enemies difficult to spot, so the location was ill-suited to encounters, I thought. (laughs)







11 FLOORS

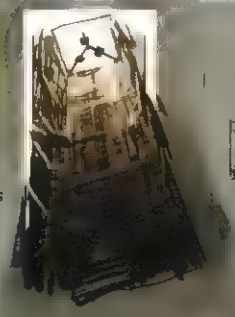
SIMPLE

-ANGLE FROM ABOVE

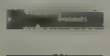
-STAIRS, LANDING

-PASSAGE

3 OF THEM



BRIDGE

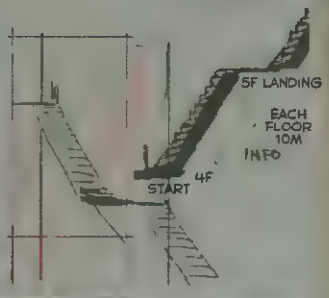


OUTER

INNER

LIKE TETRIS BLOCKS

MORE LIKE TETRIS BLOCKS

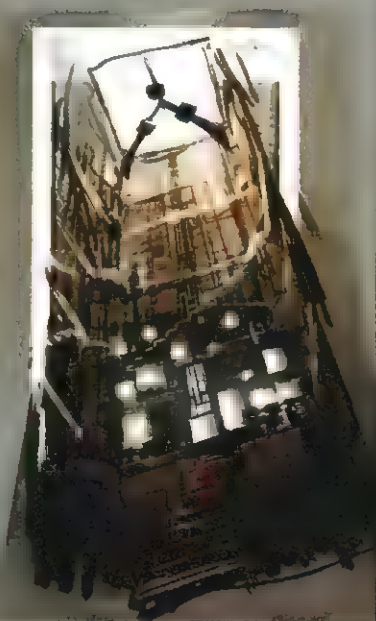


5F LANDING

EACH FLOOR 10M

INFO

START 4F



VIEW FROM 5F

SHIBUYA 08

T O K Y O

Concept art: Shibuya
Concept art: Scramble Crossing
Generic road
Club Milton alley
Club Milton exterior

The rain falling in [redacted] might seem significant but it's not. (laughs) It's just that we came up with a bunch of different patterns to try, and that was one of them. There are a lot of dungeon structures in Shibuya. You've got the expansive Mark City underground shopping plaza, the downtown area, and Club Milton at the end of the back alleys. Shibuya really tested the map designers' know-how, and I'm personally fond of the finished product, which puts it all together nicely. But it's an area that's naturally easy to get lost in, what with all the entrances and exits to and from the underground. (laughs)

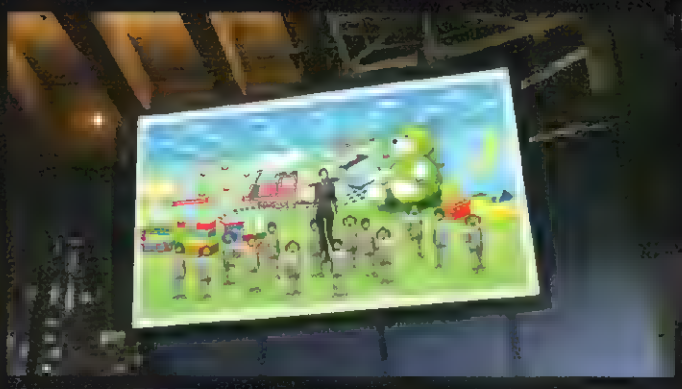
Club Milton in [redacted] is based on a club that Kaneko used to frequent way back when. Apparently it had gargoyle statues out front, which is a good indication that it was a product of the ['80s economic] bubble. (laughs) I never engaged in that sort of club culture, so I just nodded while secretly doing some research on the Internet. (laughs) The reason you never see Club Milton's interior in the game (and why we don't have resources for it) is actually just because I had no idea what it should look like inside. That's why all the events that have to do with the club take place outside it. Wait, no. Actually, it's because there were probably a bunch of demons doing horrible things in there, and we couldn't very well show that. Yup. (laughs)

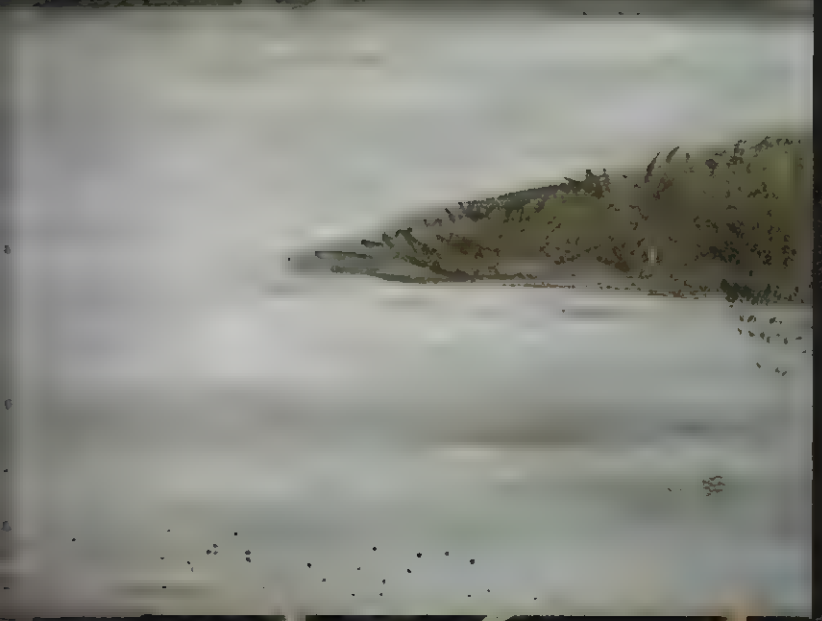
ROPPONGI 09

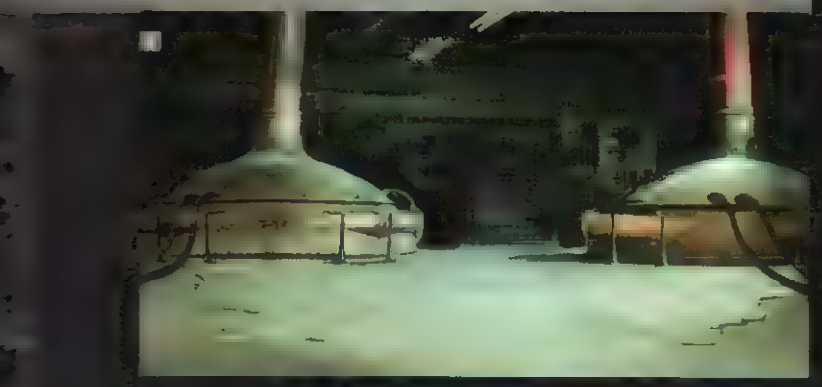
TOKYO

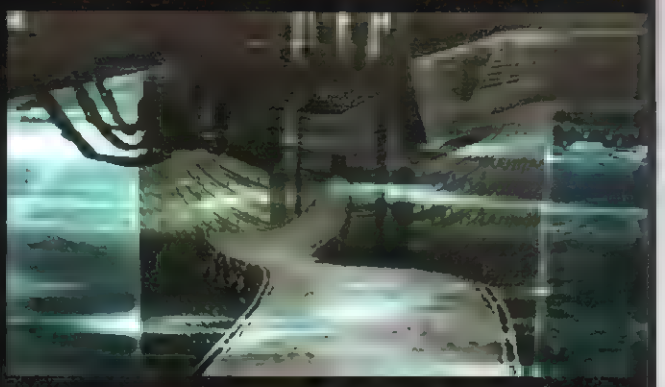
- Concept art: Roppongi
- Midtown
- Midtown interior
- Roppongi
- Southbound tunnel
- Southbound tunnel
- Mastema's office

Just like in real life, from the start we made Roppongi the home of the rich, fancy yuppie types... well, they're not exactly ruling anything here. (laughs) The people here are essentially the underground version of the Luxurors from up above. It is an attempt to show that. If the high-class people in Roppongi are on good terms with demons, then there'll be demons there too. In the game, the people in Roppongi aren't necessarily upstanding citizens... they're the types you'd expect to be members of the Ashura-kai, with the double-breasted suits you always see in direct-to-video movies. (laughs) The Hills residents are almost interchangeable with the Ashura-kai members, but would that really work? I thought that might be too simplistic. I struggled with that for a while before deciding that ordinary people in this world would naturally want to join the Ashura-kai in order to have a better life, but doing so would require stepping on the backs of others. So that's the direction we went in.









HILLS 10

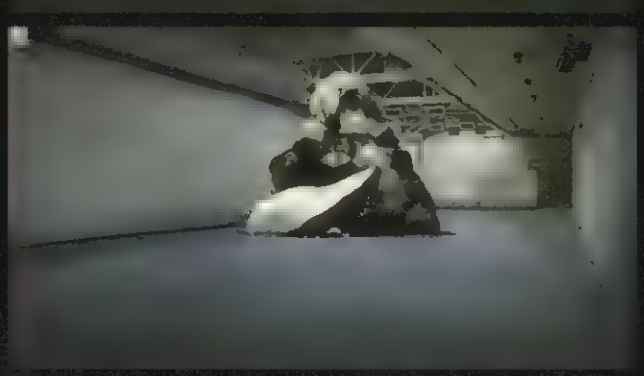
T O K Y O

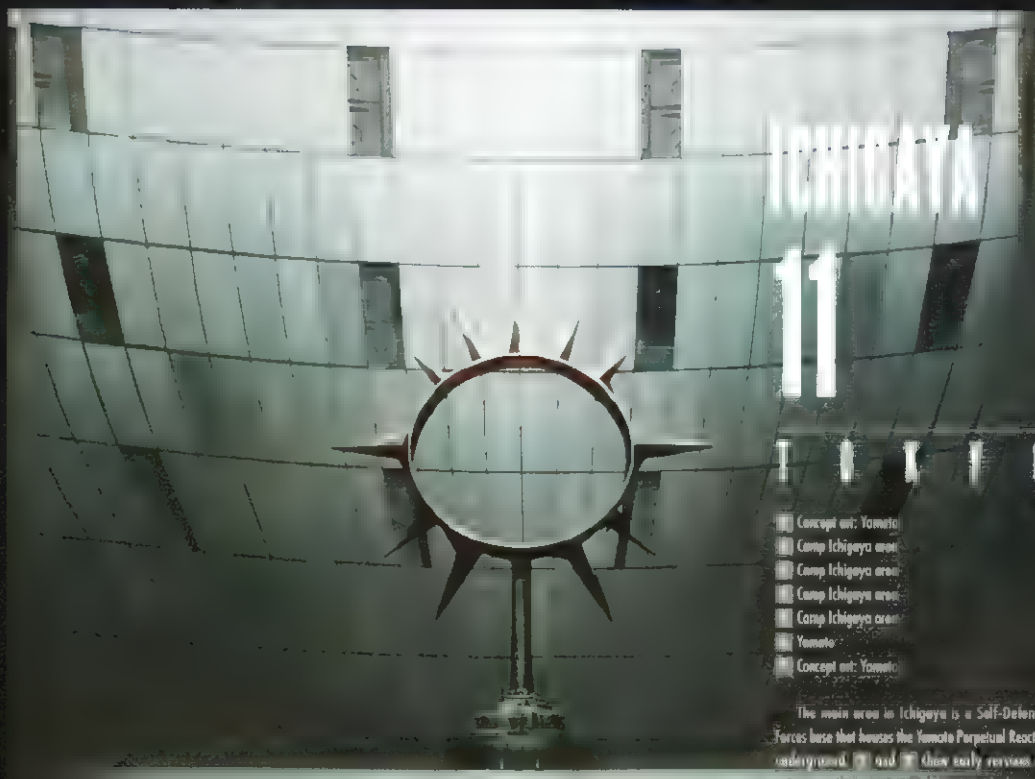
- Hills front
- Hills interior
- Concept art: Hills interior
- Reverse Hills entrance
- Red Pill Factory
- Reverse Hills interior
- Reverse Hills interior

The Hills building is basically Toyama's castle; his base of operations from which he controls Tokyo. The members of his organization are given floors of their own, and the things that happen there had to be cut for the benefit of our players under the age of 15. I wish I could have included that nasty stuff, but CERO ordered us to axe it. Doing any more than we did would have required an 18+ rating. (laughs)

The spider-like thing in [redacted] might seem like it has a special meaning, but it's actually just based on a real piece of art in the Hills.

The Reverse Hills dungeon under the Hills isn't an otherworldly transformation, but it does exist in a pocket dimension. With no outside interference, it's there that Toyama runs his Red Pill Factory, which serves as his trump card in his negotiations with demons. Mastema guards his own exclusive entrance into the Reverse Hills, and he guides the protagonist's group through it. It's not clear whether or not the Reverse Hills' architecture is made possible thanks to demonic power, so I can't really say how it came to be. I just hope that players were pleasantly shocked by it. (laughs) Like, "Whaaaat? Reverse Hills!?"





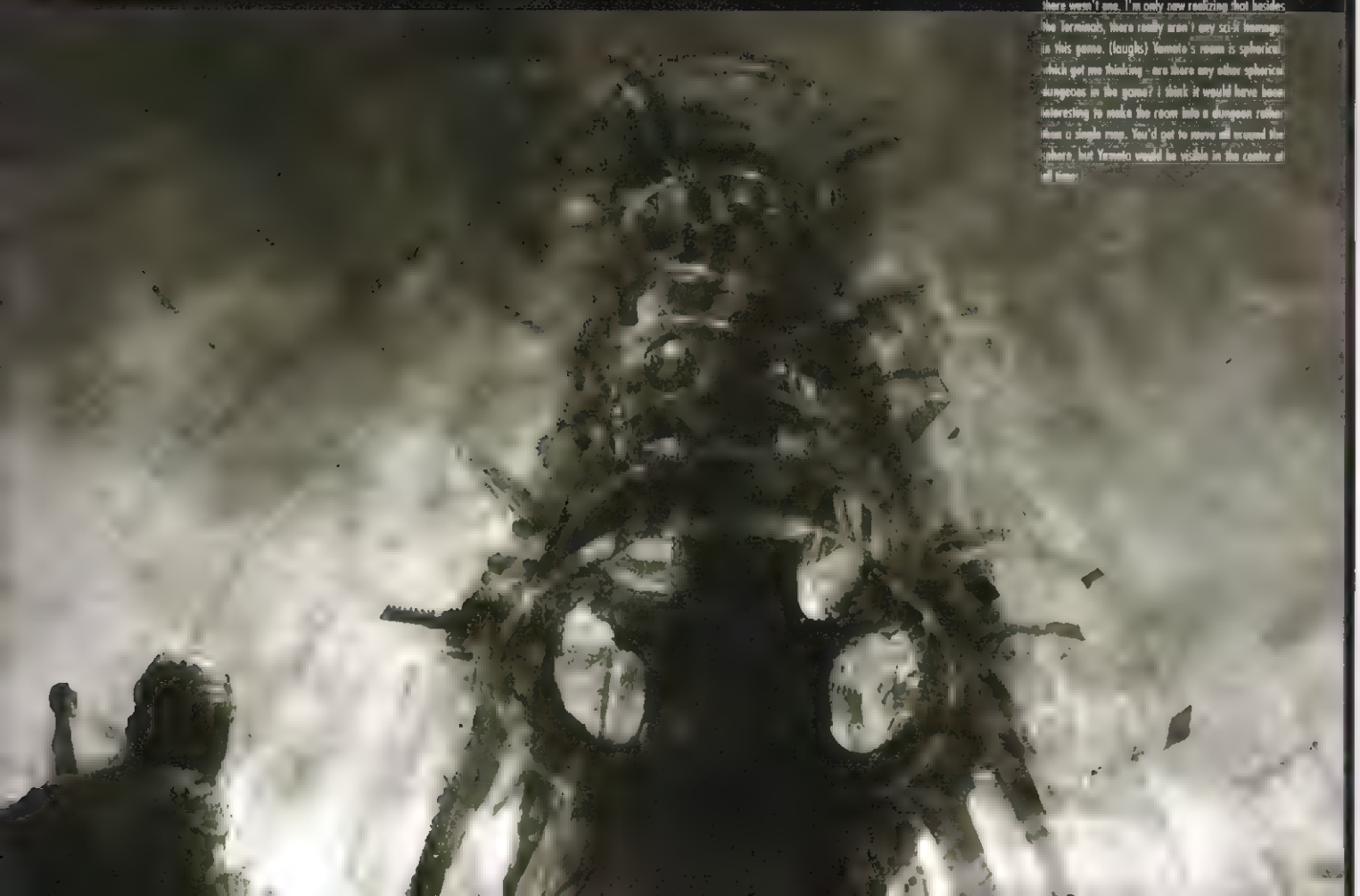
ICHIGAYA 11

TEXTS

- Concept art: Yamato
- Camp Ichigaya area
- Camp Ichigaya area
- Camp Ichigaya area
- Camp Ichigaya area
- Yamato
- Concept art: Yamato

The main area in Ichigaya is a Self-Defense Forces base that houses the Yamato Perpetual Reactor underground. [redacted] and [redacted] show early versions of [redacted]. I thought up this cat-like gimmicks because of its role as a guarantor. I showed them to Kaneko, and he said, "How about something a little simpler," so I settled on [redacted]... Looking back, that's quite a difference between the early versions and the simple one we used. (laughs)

If Yamato is pushed over capacity, it opens a link to the Expanse, from which demons will pour through. So Kaneko said, "Make sure you've got that 'gate' nuance somewhere in there," which led to the final version. As for a source of inspiration for Yamato... there wasn't one. I'm only now realizing that besides the Terminals, there really aren't any sci-fi homages in this game. (laughs) Yamato's room is spherical, which got me thinking – are there any other spherical dungeons in the game? I think it would have been interesting to make the room into a dungeon rather than a simple room. You'd get to move all around the sphere, but Yamato would be visible in the center at all times.



GINZA 12

TOKYO

- Concept art: Ginza
- Ginza high-class shop
- Hongwanji front
- Concept art: Hongwanji interior
- Hongwanji interior

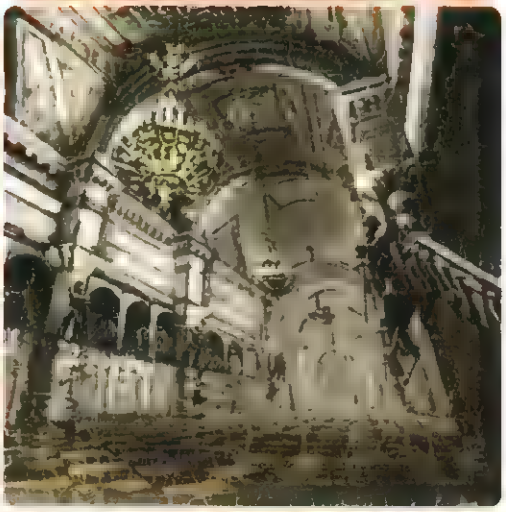
The in-game area that uses the real-world location depicted in [illegible] has a famous crossing and department store. They tie the whole place together, so I'm fond of this area. But the giant Mesakado is enshrined there, which kind of spoils the view. (laughs)

The members of the Ring of Gaea can be seen worshipping Mem Aleph in [illegible], giving the impression of some primeval religion. This is another reference to "Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey". (laughs) Early versions of the Ring of Gaea had its members as more earthy, primitive-looking people who dug out a cave to use as their temple, as in [illegible]. But in the game, they just take over a famous real-life temple and use it to worship their own god.

OTHER WORLDS

04

05



06

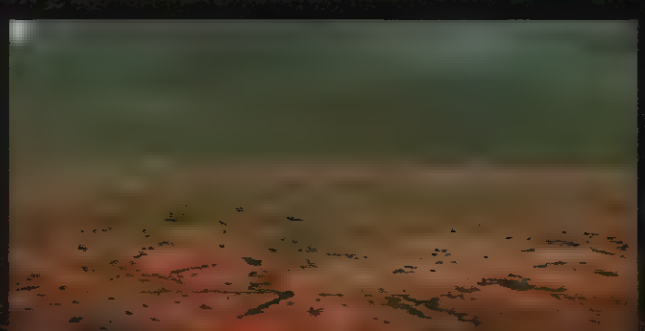
07

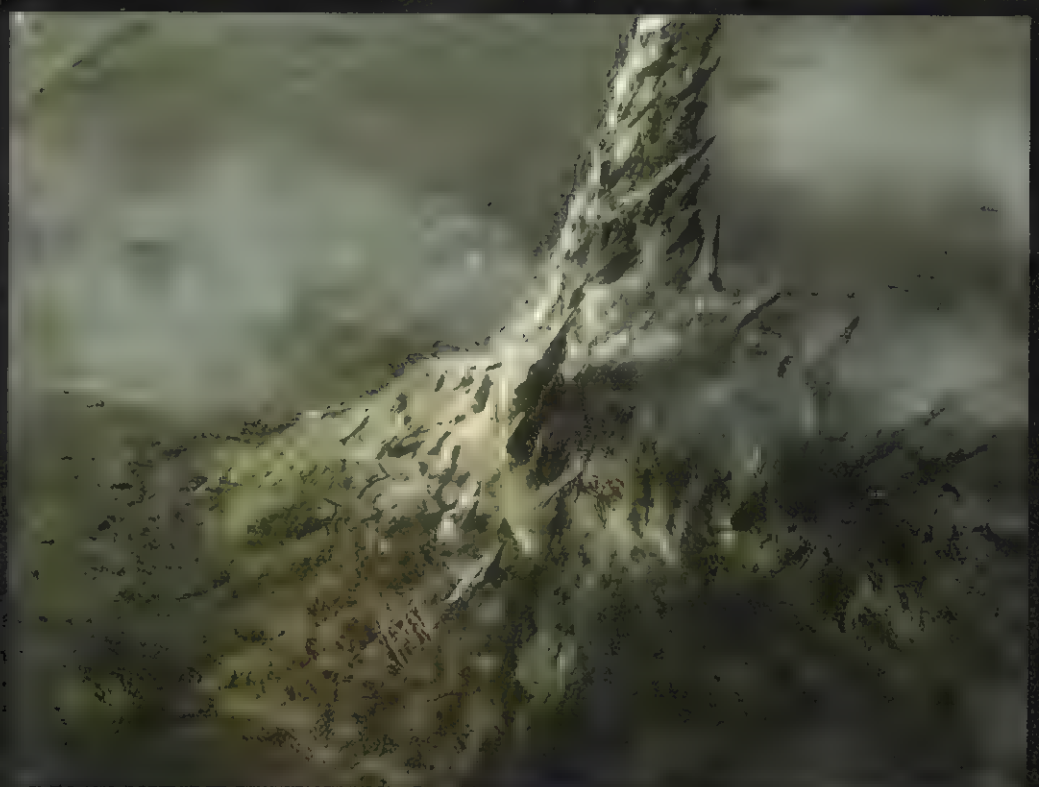
THE EXPANSE 01

OTHER WORLDS

The Expanse: Wave-beaten beach
The Expanse: Virgin Tokyo-Tower
The Expanse

The Expanse is a world situated between the material world and the world of the spirits, and we created it to be a place that reflects the image people generally have of the demon world. If demons are beings born of humans' imagination, then the Expanse is a world born of that same imagination. The goddess of Tokyo actually created the Expanse, but as she's currently awaiting revival, the Expanse is dyed gray. Its emptiness reflects her loneliness. This wave-beaten beach at the shore has a particularly lonely feel to it. The table and chairs show that, while this is a distinct world of its own, it's inspired by the goddess of Tokyo's sensibilities. The final scene of the neutral route shows the Expanse filling with color - a sure sign that the goddess has been revived.





THE EXPANSE

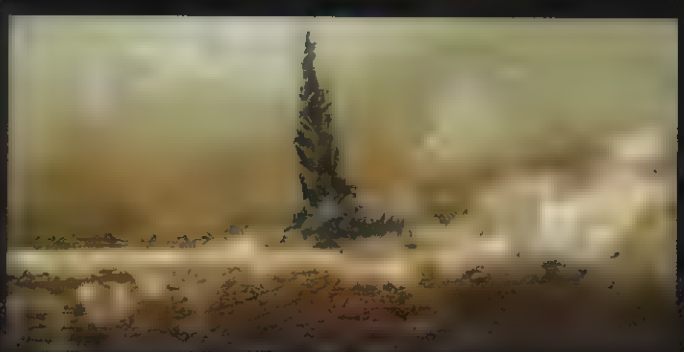
OTHER WORLDS

Concept art: The Expanse
Monochrome Forest
Concept art: The Expanse
Concept art: The Expanse
Monochrome Forest

is meant to communicate the same idea as on the previous page, but is based on the painting style of Giorgio de Chirico, with the wheel symbolizing the idea that you can "chase all you want, but you'll never catch up," as well as the fear of that concept. These images of the Expanse - the beach, the table and chairs, the empty landscape - were all ideas proposed by Kaneko.

is meant to be in the Expanse, but it's a place beyond the influence of the goddess of Tokyo. I think of it as a location where the Expanse is expanding in a very demon world-esque way.

and show the Monochrome Forest. It's the domain of the White, and it feels closer to the spirit world, almost like another dimension entirely.

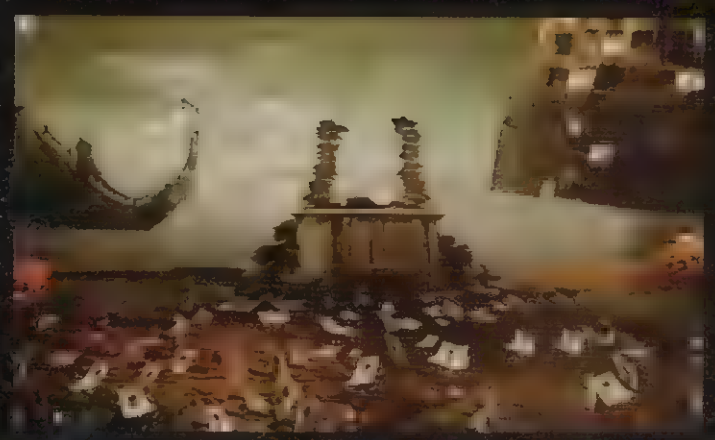


HADES 02

OTHER WORLDS

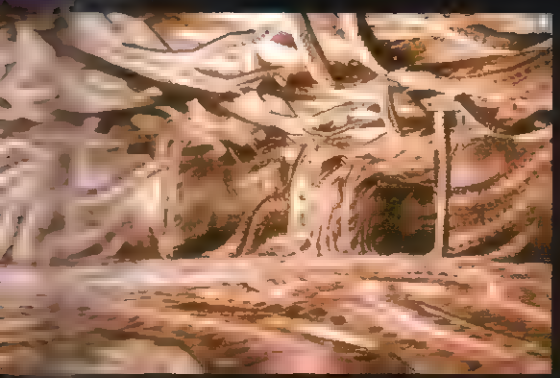
1 The River Styx
2 The River Styx

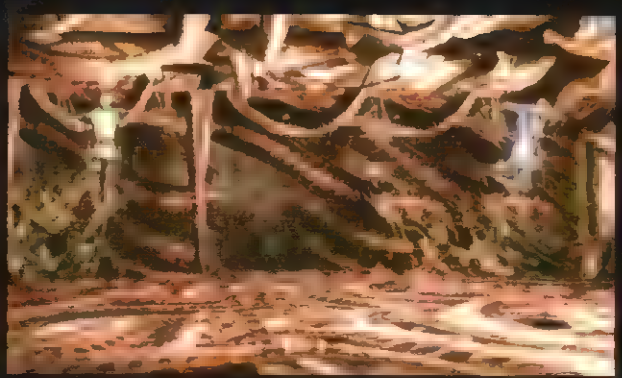
1 and 2 show the River Styx. When God remade the world 1,000 years ago, he took a handful of pure, chosen children and transported them in the cocoon to the land that would become the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. The majority of people were sacrificed in the purge, creating quite the mess down in Hades. Even after 1,000 years, they still haven't finished judging all these souls. With so many souls to process, Charon just can't catch up... well, that's the backstory I came up with in my head, anyway. (laughs) I mean, several billion people must have died on judgement day, right? The building you see in 1 and 2 was built by the waiting souls. They needed a place to live, so they went ahead and built it without permission from the Styx authorities. Hades is fundamentally a pretty-looking place, but the souls' civilization here has contaminated the area. (laughs) With Charon so behind on his work, he's sick of dealing with souls, so maybe he'd let you off for a bribe? (laughs) We know we wanted the bribe revival system from the start, but we needed a place for it to happen. That led to the scenario detailed above.

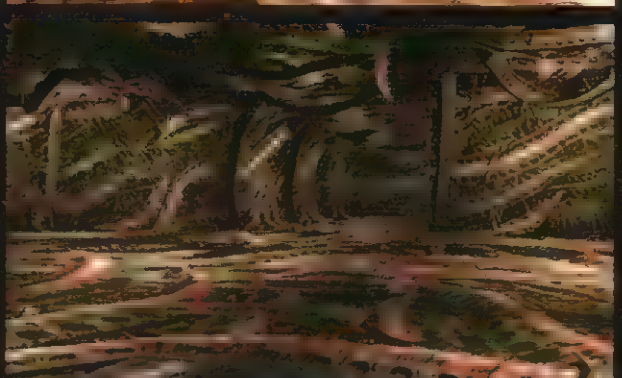


BARRIER SPACE 03

OTHER WORLDS







Concept art: Barrier space
Barrier space
Barrier space
Sky Tower interior: Barrier space
Barrier space

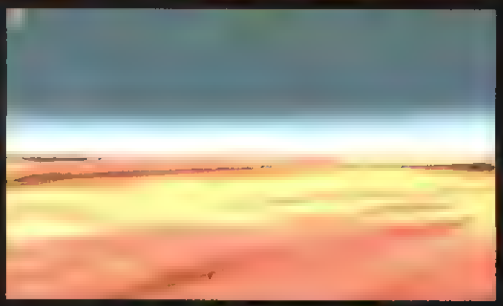
Powerful demons constructed this special space, which serves as a barrier. [illegible] shows the scene when you save Navarre. This image was inspired by Kaneko, who said, "Any barrier space dungeon has to be appropriately ominous, so let's make this one ominous in a creepy, organic way." We took that suggestion and run with it to come up with this design. One big theme running through the game is that demonic constructions are warped (literally curved, even) and organic, while human constructions are more linear and inorganic.

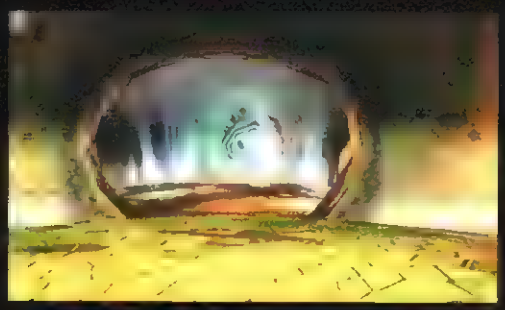
[illegible] shows an early image board. We shifted to reds for the final version, because all the concrete in the game meant that we hadn't used a lot of red otherwise, and it was decided that this area would be a good chance to use a relatively unused color.

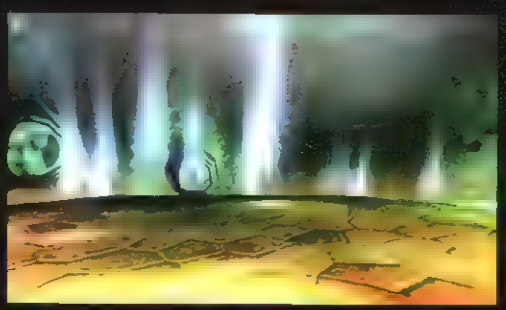
BLASTED WORLD 04

OTHER WORLDS

1 Concept art: Low Tokyo
2 Low world: Tokyo
3 Low world: Tokyo
4 Akiba
5 Low world: Weapon shop
6 Pluto's Castle
7 Pluto's Castle
8 Pluto's Castle
9 Concept art: Pluto's Castle
10 Concept art: Pluto's Castle







Blasted Tokyo is a "What if?" world, shown to the protagonist's group by the White. The unexplained backstory is that - without any help from God or otherwise - humans began turning into demons at higher rates. They began to fear and mistrust each other, and that led to full-scale nuclear war, resulting in the ruined world you see here. At that point, God began selecting chosen humans for yet another rebuilt world while simultaneously purging those who had strayed too far from what was expected of them. What remains is Pluto and Pluto's Castle.

Pluto's Castle is a structure built by God, so it's appropriately carved and organic. The exterior was inspired by the bumpy, polka-dot art of Yayoi Kusama. The little windows on the inside are inspired by the work of Gaudi, which is a source we've used again and again. The windows also resemble the cross-section of a lotus root, which we also used in "Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne". The holes that Lucifer peeks through in the dungeon are the same... we really like reusing motifs. (laughs) The cracks in the castle are supposed to be the result of the nuclear warfare. You can see a Totem-like design in [illegible], which came at a stage when Pluto's design hadn't yet been solidified. We toyed with the idea that "Pluto" might actually be a toxin-spreading organic weapon.

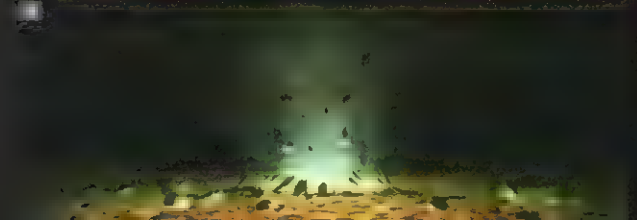
PLUTO'S CASTLE

MINATO WARD OR COASTAL AREA

GIANT CASTLE, KOTO WARD ALSO A POSSIBILITY

GROTESQUE, DOMED UPPER HALF, SPIKY

PLUTO'S CASTLE EXTERIOR

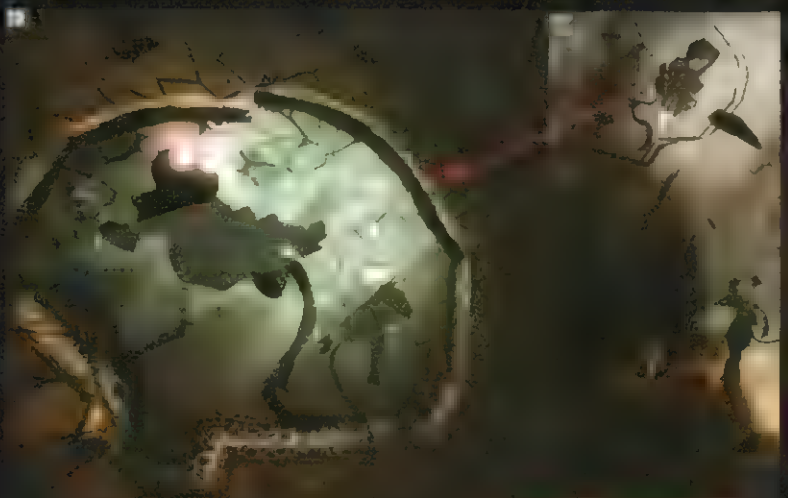


PLUTO'S CASTLE INTERIOR

MATERIAL

LIKE POTTERY OR CERAMICS...

IN MOSAIC PATTERN

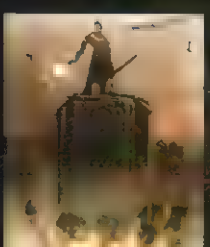


MOSAIC, POTTERY, CERAMICS

GAUDI-STYLE WINDOWS ON WALLS.

HUMAN-LIKE SHADOWS ON THE INSIDE... NOT QUITE DISCERNIBLE.

A LITTLE SPACE INSIDE + WATER SUPPLY



GROSS POLKA DOTS, GLEAMING BLACK PILLAR

INFERNAL TOKYO 05

OTHER WORLDS

Chaos world: Tokyo
Concept art: Chaos world: Tokyo

Like Blasted Tokyo, this chaotic world is another possible outcome. Most buildings are destroyed, and inextinguishable fires run rampant. I mentioned on the ordinary Tokyo page that we made sure not to destroy the city too much, but destroying the city was exactly the goal with Infernal Tokyo here. If we'd applied the "Infernal" design to the whole game, though, it would start to resemble one of those trite Western games with their overused post-apocalyptic motifs. So I think it was smart to limit this design to this single area of the game. Unlike Blasted Tokyo, Infernal Tokyo is brimming with energy and activity despite the destruction. That's what we wanted to get across.

PARTS THAT MAKE UP THE FABRICATED SPACE: "FRACTALS"

FRACTALS COMBINE TO FORM THE RED PATH

WHOLE WORLD IS MADE UP OF THESE FRACTALS

LITTLE SPARKS WHEN THEY COM
"CRACKLE CRACKLE CRACKLE"

FABRICATED SPACE

THESE ARE FLYING OBJECTS TO START WITH, SO EVEN AFTER COMBINING, THE PATH THAT FORMS SWAYS BACK AND

PURGATORIUM

06

OTHER WORLDS

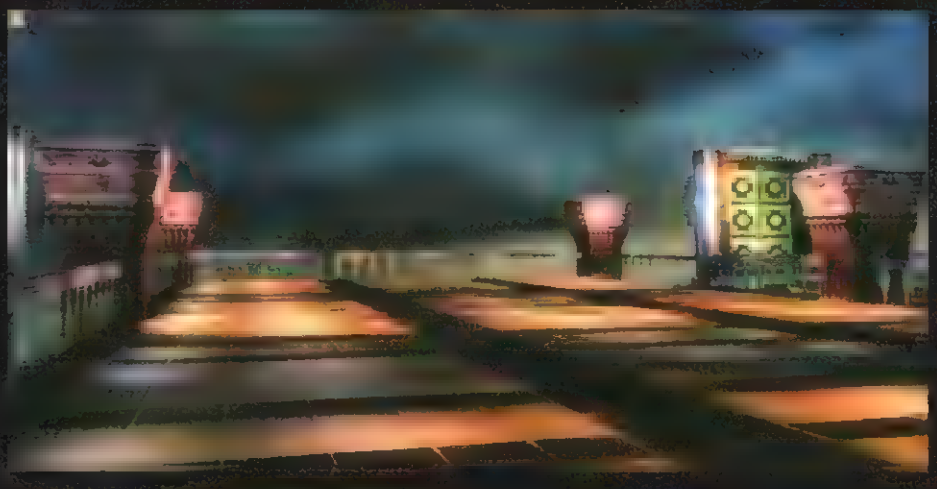
- Concept art: Purgatorium
- Concept art: Purgatorium
- Purgatorium
- Purgatorium

Purgatorium is the final dungeon for the chaos path. Isn't it neat how it's an equal faith divine and chaotic? The choice to use fractals as the primary motif throughout was made because fractals themselves are emblematic of chaos, even within chaos theory. So these chaotic fractals represent law? Isn't that a contradiction...? The implied metaphor is that law and chaos are fundamentally the same thing. With that said, the final product was so chaotic that it even took me aback. (laughs) The other final law dungeons in the rest of the series have never been this chaotic, and the goal here was to make that difference clear. ...To be honest, I wish we could've shown the "divine" side of the area a bit more. That still bugs me to this day. (laughs)

LUCIFER PALACE 07

OTHER WORLDS

- [redacted] Palace
- Lucifer Palace: Exterior
- Concept art: Lucifer Palace
- Concept art: Lucifer Palace
- Concept art: Lucifer Palace
- Concept art: Lucifer Palace



Lucifer Palace is the final dungeon of the low path - the counterpart to Purgatorium. The design is filled with church-like, systematic, beautiful elements. The two final dungeons' positions used to be reversed; Purgatorium was chaos and Lucifer Palace was law. But as I explained on the previous page, we switched them to represent the inherent interchangeability of law and chaos.

Lucifer has a lot of fun stirring up trouble, and it's fun to watch what will sprout from the seed he nourishes. That's definitely part of Lucifer's popular appeal. The ideas in [redacted] weren't used, but I had wanted Lucifer to peek at the protagonist through the windows in the last dungeon. The chessboard idea for the floor would show that he views the protagonist as a chess piece, kind of like he's saying, "I'm merely toying with you." It would have been nice to include that. Making this massive enemy have enough leeway to view you as a plaything would make players say, "Guess we shouldn't have expected less from Lucifer himself!" (laughs)

FRACTAL INKY SKY SPACE

LUCIFER PEEKS IN AT PLAYER INSIDE FROM INKY SPACE OUTSIDE

LIKE HE'S ENJOYING WATCHING A CHESS MATCH

WORLD-RELATED LOCATIONS / TERMINOLOGY

[illegible]

The peaceful, pastoral kingdom where the protagonists live. Founded by Aquila in Gregorian year 0, the kingdom is, in the year 1492, now ruled by King Ahazuya Mikado. Society is cleanly split between the upper-class Luxurors, who do intellectual and religious work, and the lower-class Casualties, who perform all manual labor. The class system is hereditary, with children inheriting their parents' status and job. The difference in living standards between the two groups is staggering, particularly when it comes to education, but the people rarely object to the system, as the Monastery teaches that it is all part of God's will. Society as a whole is peaceful and mostly without strife because the Monastery preaches the virtues of "honorable poverty".

Mikado is the realization of the plan by God to forsake the avaricious while offering salvation to the meek and obedient in this kingdom of heaven. As a result, any unnecessary knowledge that could lead to desire has been purged, and information is tightly controlled. The kingdom's bedrock actually forms the ceiling of the domed Tokyo below, whose existence is little more than a myth to the people of Mikado.

MIKADO CASTLE

The mainstay of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, built atop a slightly elevated hill. The king lives within the multi-walled castle, but the walls are not meant to defend against attacks from the outside. Rather, they exist to prevent the diffusion of demons that might pour out from within Naraku. The castle also houses the obelisk plaza with King Aquila's epigraph, as well as a stone statue built in honor of the king. Ordinary citizens are rarely permitted entry into the castle; the only exceptions are for the Gauntlet Rite and other special festivals.

MONASTERY

An organization established to communicate God's will to the people, the Monastery is led by Abbot Hugo in the year 1492. Beyond enlightening the people, the Monastery has also served as an advisor to generations of monarchs. After over 1,000 years since the kingdom's founding, the archangel Gabriel appears in the form of Gabby, a human woman. She watches over the pastoral society, ensuring providence for the good and worthy people.

KICCIGIORGI VILLAGE

A village located in the western part of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, Kiccigiorgi is the hometown of both the protagonist and Issachar. Most of the villagers are farmers by designation, and although they do not live in luxury, what they do have is sufficient. However, the literature brought in by the Black Samurai and read in secret at the "Sabbath" meetings transforms most of the villagers into demons, resulting in the village's destruction.

SHENE DUQUE

A holy site in the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado where a giant cocoon is enshrined. Prior to the kingdom's founding, the angels brought the chosen children to the land in the cocoon, so the site is still worshipped to this day. While most of Mikado is lush and verdant, this area alone is craggy and sandy, as it was formed by angels themselves.

NARAKU

In Mikado's creation myth, Naraku is the forbidden place in which the first king, Aquila, sealed up the demons. This story - and the idea that demons could spring forth from the hole - tends to keep the people of Mikado from treading near. Deep inside rests the Minotaur, who made a pact with Aquila and agreed to seal off the land below for the past 1,000 years. It's actually just a tunnel bored in the body of Masakado, which forms the ground of Mikado. The lowest part of the tunnel connects with the upper tip of the Sky Tower, which was pioneered by people below hoping to reach the ceiling.

SAMURAI

Tasked with protecting the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado is an organization called the "Samurai". On the surface, the Samurai preserve law and order in the land, but in truth, their job is to exterminate Naraku's demons and to summon demons using technologically-advanced Gauntlets. The "Samurai" name and Gauntlet know-how came from Aquila himself, who subjugated the demons and sealed off the world below. His teachings are still respected to this day. It's customary for all citizens to go through the "Gauntlet Rite", a Samurai qualification ceremony, when they turn 18. Those whose applications qualify them for the position are enlisted whether they want to be or not. Aptitude for Gauntlet use seems to be linked to the amount of native Tokyo blood flowing through one's veins.

The Anthony who shows up now and then in the rankings at K's Tavern is a veteran Samurai who shares his name with a cool, female-demon-chasing member of some distant organization. It's unclear if the two have any connection beyond their name or if Anthony just happens to be a common name.

[illegible]

The vast metropolis beneath the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. Tokyo enjoys high standards as far as technology and civilization go, but it was overrun by a sudden influx of demons from the Expanse 25 years ago. At the time, military and civilian volunteers formed the Counter-Demon Force and engaged in a vicious battle with the demons. Even today, the people live in fear of the threat that demons pose.

Any semblance of order preserved amidst the chaos is thanks to the work of the Ashura-kai, which provides demons with nourishing "Red Pills". In exchange, the demons promise to let the people live in peace. However, the organization is opposed by the Ring of Gaea, which is cognizant of the violence committed by authority figures and seeks a revolution operating on the principle of "survival of the fittest".

The rocky dome that blankets the city is called "the ceiling". It was erected 25 years ago by the angels to protect Tokyo from nuclear strikes, but the city was isolated and cut off from the rest of the world in the process. The war that necessitated Tokyo's protection from nuclear attacks in the first place was a global one, but it's unknown whether or not other major cities received similar ceilings.

UENO

Located in the northern part of Tokyo, Ueno is the first place that Samurai descending from Mikado tend to visit. The eastern area of Ueno features the Sky Tower, which reaches all the way to the ceiling. The foreign demon Pedilaidh has taken up residence in Shinobazu Pond, once known for its natural beauty, sending the people of the underground market into severe poverty. The Hunter Wall-eyed Jun lost his family to the beast. He asks the protagonists to kill Pedilaidh so that he too can die without regret.

CHIYODA

The governmental and economic center of Tokyo since long ago, Chiyoda features Kasumigaseki, which once housed government offices. It was made the base of the Counter-Demon Force 25 years ago when the organization assumed responsibility for defending humans. Even though the force was annihilated, its members' equipment and data still exist in Chiyoda.

SHINJUKU

The areas to the east and west of the station differ greatly in flavor. To the east is the large red-light district known as Kabukicho, as well as Florica Café, which serves as Fujiwara and friends' headquarters. To the west is the skyscraper-filled urban center, which includes the Metropolitan Government Office. It's there that the demon Kuebiko - who laments the unclean blood that taints the land - establishes his base. Shinjuku National Park lies southeast of the station. There, the Ashura-kai maintains a field of crops, and the vegetables grown there are allocated only to special, privileged individuals. There's also Kagome Tower, in which the angels Michael, Raphael, and Uriel are imprisoned. The tower, too, is blockaded by the demons and the Ashura-kai.

IKEBUKURO

A district in the western part of Tokyo. The area was once as prosperous as Shinjuku and Shibuya, and it was famous for the giant bookstore Juraku. Its residents rejected the Ashura-kai's control and drove the organization out, but as a result they were unable to oppose the demons. Ikebukuro is now devoid of human life, right down to the underground market. The district is also the site of a fight to the death between Ring of Gaea member Kaga and the demon Xi Wangmu, who has made her base in the landmark Sunshine 60 building.

SHIBUYA

A district where many train lines intersect, resulting in a complicated underground tunnel system. With its famous Scramble Crossing, distinctive streets, and Shibuya 109 shopping center, it was once known as the place to be for young people. Club Milton, in Dogenzaka, is one place where the Ashura-kai distributes Red Pills to demons. After taking a Samurai hostage, Tayama forces the protagonists to confront Club Milton's Koga Saburo, a demon who opposes Tayama. Though he doesn't want to fight, Koga Saburo is forced into a battle to the death.

ROPPONGI

A district that's home to both Midtown as well as Roppongi Hills, the Ashura-kai's main headquarters. The Ashura-kai controls all of Tokyo, so its home base retains the gaudiness and pomp that the other areas of the city lost during the war. Beneath Roppongi lies the unsettling Reverse Hills, which is actually a factory where humans are farmed to produce Red Pills. The angel Masterna oversees the top-secret manufacture and circulation of the Red Pills.

The self-styled "loyal servant of God" Masterna is a gentleman of an angel who has an eye mask, long black hair, a tunic that goes down to his knees, and fittingly bare feet. Although he calls the production of Red Pills "a necessary evil allowed by God", he sees the protagonists as brothers-in-arms and guides them in defeating Tayama. According to Walter, he's a shady character whose halo ought to be inspected before believing in his angelhood.

GINZA

The Ring of Gaea's home base can be found here. The cult's main temple is Tsukiji Hongwanji, and the enshrined goddess there attracts throngs of worshippers. Ginza is the only district that remains free of the Ashura-kai's influence. The people are united against the demons, who don't underestimate them as mere prey. The giant demon Masakado is enshrined at the crossing in District 4 near the towering high-class department store, Ginza Wako. The fact that the massive rock there is actually the demon's body is unknown to all.

ICHIGAYA

Camp Ichigaya - which is responsible for national defense - is located here. Underground, the Yamato Perpetual Reactor uses plasma energy to provide endless electricity for all of Tokyo. It has been seized by the Ashura-kai, which charges one of the National Defense Divinities with guarding it. Yamka, the Ring of Gaea's leader, aims to use Yamato's high energy output to open a gate to the Expanse, allowing demons to flow through. Both sides see the reactor as the key to destroying the other and assuming absolute control, resulting in a vicious battle between the two organizations.

WANGAN

Reclaimed land inside Tokyo Bay that contains the Tennozu and Toyosu areas. Unlike other parts of the city, Wangan wasn't previously a residential area, although humans have now taken shelter there. After the king of Mikado, Ahazuya Mikado, is dethroned by the four archangels, he flees to Tennozu and assumes control as the demon-summoning "Red Knight".

THE WAR 25 YEARS AGO

The large-scale war between God and demons that was sparked when demons began attacking humans. The angels spirited away the humans worth saving in the cocoon while down in Tokyo, the Counter-Demon Force was formed to put a stop to demon attacks. In the end, one of the force's members sacrificed himself to form the rock ceiling that now protects the city from nuclear strikes. The Eastern Kingdom of Mikado was founded shortly thereafter, and although only 25 years have passed in Tokyo, nearly 1500 years have passed in Mikado.

[redacted]

Artifacts from Tokyo's civilization and culture. A lot of these items are still in use even after the war between angels and demons, including smartphones loaded with demon summoning programs used by Hunters. Much of it is viewed as advanced technology by the people of Mikado, whose technological standards have regressed. They find it impossible to analyze most of the tech, regarding and fearing the objects as "magical artifacts"

DEMON SUMMONING PROGRAM

A program developed by Stephen long ago to summon and control demons. It spread throughout the world via the internet and became well-known to the general public. The American-made Demonica suits from the war 25 years ago, which have the program installed in them, became the official uniform of the Counter-Demon Force. The Gauntlets and Gountlets alone were adopted by Mikado's Samurai, although they don't quite understand the devices, which they see as magical artifacts. They've come to call the Gauntlets' operating system AI, Burroughs, the "fairy" who lives in the Gauntlets.

TERMINAL

Devices made for instantaneous long-distance travel that are positioned throughout the major areas of Tokyo. The Ashura-kai seized control of them after the war, placing capable individuals called "Terminal Guardians" to blockade each location. There are also Terminals in Mikado and the Sky Tower. They're thought to have been placed by the Unclean Ones of ages past, who attempted to travel up through the tower.

The Terminal Guardians are capable and bombastic, with outright battle strategies. They summon all sorts of different demon teams, including a "pretty boy" group of all-male demons and other such quirky teams. The guardians' gags get worse and worse with each encounter, and they're surprisingly casual about their job; even when they're defeated, they don't seem particularly stressed out about it. The group of guardians is comprised of an old man, a girl, an intellectual, and others, but rumor has it that they're all actually the same person putting on a series of rather convincing acts.

[redacted]

People in Tokyo who make a living by fighting demons and taking on other requests. Most join the "Hunter Association", which allows them to compete for fame and reputation. The Hunter Association's rankings are open to both Hunters and ordinary people, and this friendly competition between Hunters helps to preserve some semblance of order in Tokyo. Requests are brought in by citizens, demons, and even those in the Ashura-kai's management. The organization's original goal was to take back Tokyo from angel and demon control, although knowledge of that purpose has largely been lost. Fujiwara and Sumi founded the organization in order to cultivate talent on par with that of the defunct Counter-Demon Force.

ASSOCIATION GOURMET

Food eaten by the Hunter Association members. Each base features its own special gourmet menu, which is available to anyone for the low, low price of 100 Macca. The dishes include croquettes from a famous store in Ueno filled with "meat or something" and jumbo creme-filled pastries from a Western sweets chain in Ginza. People who know what Tokyo used to be like never imagined they could find musk melon [illegible] other such delicacies in this unimaginably dark world. However most of the foods are made with crude substitutions. As a result, Jonathan and Isabeau - both Luxurors - tend to turn their noses up at these dishes.

The Hunter Association is full of colorful characters who play their parts and eke out livings in one way or another. One regular in the rankings, Togo, puts his life on the line in a fateful battle with demons in Ginza. Hiroshi, another regular, likes betting one million Macca in a quiz game. Another Hunter the protagonist helps out is Nazami. After many twists and turns, she becomes the successor to the goddess Lady Daru, opting for a dramatic and weighty existence.

[redacted]

The White - ethereal beings who reside in the Expanse - show the protagonist futures that might have happened had different choices been made. In the main timeline, the angels created the rock ceiling to defend Tokyo against nuclear strikes, but in one of these alternate timelines, the ceiling was never erected. In the other alternate timeline, the angels were all exterminated. In all cases, though, there exists a man named Akira who fights for humanity. The protagonists are introduced to two timelines in which Akira leads humanity to salvation, and the timelines converge with the founding of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado.

BLASTED TOKYO

A ruined world ruled over by the Tyrant Pluto after, as the angels predicted, most of the earth is destroyed by nuclear warfare. With Akira and Kiyoharu at their center, a few members of the original Counter-Demon Force survive inside a shelter. Kiyoharu proclaims the protagonist to be the messiah they've waited for and asks him to defeat Pluto. After succeeding in that effort, Akira declares that he will go on to found the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, eventually leading to a world that proves the Ring of Gaea's edict that "whether cooperating with demons or not, only the strong will survive."

INFERNAL TOKYO

A world in which humans choose to summon demons and even transform into demons themselves in order to annihilate the angels. Humans who fuse with demons are called "demonoids", while humans who become their food source are violently subjugated and called "nourishers". The protagonist is seen as an intruder and is asked by the demonoid Akira to help defeat Kenji, King of Tokyo. Kenji is dethroned, and Akira, the new king, claims that his ideal world is one where all humans are equal. This leads to the founding of the utopian Eastern Kingdom of Mikado in this timeline's future.

[redacted]

The umbrella term for supernatural beings. It doesn't just refer to evil creatures, but also the spirits of the deceased, fairies, and in the broadest sense, God and angels. One theory sees demons as the embodiments of human desire, and the demons that reside in Tokyo are ones that sprang forth from the Expanse.

FOUR ARCHANGELS

The four angels - Michael, Raphael, Uriel, and Gabriel - who guided Aquila to found the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. Among them, Gabriel poses as Gabby, a member of the Monastery who attempts to fix the corruption present in Mikado. Michael, Raphael, and Uriel are imprisoned in Kagome Tower by demons, but after the protagonist sets them free, they force King Ahazuya Mikado to abdicate before assuming direct control over Mikado.

PATRIOTIC SAMURAI MASAKADO

A native spirit who has protected Tokyo since time immemorial. In the war 25 years ago, he was struck down by a boy in the Counter-Demon Force, and the two fused to form the ceiling covering the city. Masakado's giant body is enshrined in a monolith near the crossing in District 4 of Ginza. Skins is in possession of his massive katana - longer than most people are tall - which is a medium that serves to bind Masakado's spirit.

NATIONAL DEFENSE DIVINITIES

A group of demons led by Masakado who have come to protect Tokyo. Their ranks also include Kaga Saburo, Tenka, Yaso Magatsuhi, Omoikane, Michizane, and Yamato Takeru, making seven members in all. The six besides Masakado are enslaved by Tayama and forced to guard his key facilities around Tokyo against their will.

Tayama controls the National Defense Divinities, and he orders Yaso Magatsuhi to guard the Reverse Hills. Oddly enough, he does this by flustering intruders with his sweet-smelling gas. Caught in his trap, the protagonists bring shame to the dignity of the Samurai name when they start rolling around on the floor like cats, taking off their pants, and other embarrassing things.

PURGATORIUM

A fabricated space erected in the Hall of the Minotaur in Naraku that serves as God and the angels' base. The interior is constructed of organic matter, and the paths twist, turn, and even flip upside down at times. It only manifests before those who have sided with demons, attempting to block their path.

LUCIFER PALACE

The beautiful, church-like palace where the fallen angel Lucifer resides. It's a fabricated space that blocks the way to the deepest part of Camp Ichigaya. An infinite number of rooms form a baffling maze, and reaching the palace's master is no easy task.

[redacted]

The people of the worlds. God implanted in them the desire for law and order, but they share a fundamental greed and foolishness with demons, who reside in the Expanse.

UNCLEAN ONES

The nickname given to the residents of Tokyo by the angels and the people of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, who are under the angels' influence. According to Mikado's founding myth, God and the angels sealed away the impure people of Tokyo before building a new, pure world for the people up above, labeling the former as Unclean Ones. The fact that the angels call the people they abandoned "Unclean Ones" just goes to exemplify their sense of superiority over humans.

CHOSEN ONES

The traditional name that the people of Mikado gave themselves, in contrast to the Unclean Ones. The term was originally a designation for those who meekly gave their bodies to God so they could be taken to the heavens in the cocoon. The Chosen Ones are supposed to be of a pure bloodline, but some people living in Mikado such as the protagonist, Jonathan, and Walter, are actually the descendants of Unclean Ones who escaped the angels' purge and made their way to the world above.

THE WHITE

The embodiment of the ancient races destroyed by angels. They've appeared to humans in the modern era four times now, sharing their memories and knowledge of the past. They claim that whether humans submit to angels or unite with demons against God, history is doomed to repeat itself and the future will never change. Therefore they aim to obliterate all existence and return the cosmos to nothingness. They show the protagonist visions of two alternate futures - "Blasted Tokyo" and "Infernal Tokyo" - while taking on the appearances of Isabeau and Hugo in order to deceive the protagonist.

人間

OPLE

The Characters Created by Masayuki Doi
nents by Masayuki Doi

PROTAGONIST

主人公

(Voiced by Yuki Kaji)

A young resident of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado who passes the Gauntlet Rite and earns a place in the honorable Samurai organization. Not just a member of the working-class Casualries, he was actually born far from the castle in the border village of Kiccigiorgi. As such, the privileged Luxurors who make up the majority of the Samurai ranks tend to look down on him. However, his taciturn fortitude and undeniable skill with a blade earn him the recognition of his fellow Samurai.

An encounter with the Black Samurai - who seeks to sow anti-establishment discord among the people - kicks off a sequence of events that leads the protagonist and his fellow Samurai Jonathan, Walter, and Isabeau down to Tokyo, which lies beneath Mikado. The so-called "Unclean Ones" of Tokyo adhere to a variety of beliefs and pursue their respective goals. Meanwhile, angels and demons have made the world their plaything, which is something the protagonist dreams about repeatedly.

The residents of the ravaged Tokyo take note of him not just because of his foreign outfit and long, feminine, tied-back hair, but also because he resembles a young member of the Counter-Demon Force who gave his life in the war 25 years ago. In other words, the protagonist is the reincarnation of the youth who borrowed the power and body of the demon Masakado and sacrificed himself to cover Tokyo with a protective ceiling.

Guided by his Gauntlet, he grieves for the state of the bifurcated world and strives to offer salvation to the "goddess of Tokyo", who is thought to be the city itself. He battles not just to protect the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, but also to confront the doom that has befallen Tokyo, his home in a past life.

■ Official illustration
■ Official illustration: White-silver surcoat

The concept with this game's character designs was "the unreal within the real". That sense of reality is necessary to draw the player into the game's world, but I had to give the characters unrealistic quirks in order to keep things feeling original. The quintessential "MegaTen" feel lies somewhere in that "unreal within the real" concept.

The protagonist really embodied that idea. He had to show enough personality to hold up as the face of the game while still being enough of a blank slate to serve as a suitable avatar for the player. There was a lot of trial and error.

First, giving him the Samurai uniform (which are all the same) shows how lacking in idiosyncrasies he is. It's the same idea with school uniforms in our world. But then, his unique hairstyle gives him a bit of individuality. There were pros and cons to that choice, and I designed his hair assuming there would be some pushback. Nowadays, it's not enough just to have something look "cool". I was aiming for a distinctive design that wouldn't be quickly forgotten.

Incidentally, when it came to the hairstyle, I was going for the samurai period drama or ninja manga long hair look, but the staff told me it looked like Wakame-chan from "Sazae-san". (bitter laugh)

With ■, I wanted to have him wearing a Samurai outfit again near the end of the game, so that's how this particular equipment came about. At first I thought it would be the ultimate law route armor. The triangles represent the Holy Trinity and the quilting represents the idea of being bound to God. I modeled the helmet on the Japanese hachigane while also designing it to fit the medieval European look. I'll go into detail about the Samurai uniform on the next page.

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PROTAGONIST

- Concepts
- Samurai uniform rough
- Official illustration: Line drawing
- Samurai katana/Gauntlet rough
- Casualry outfit rough
- Inner Samurai uniform rough

I didn't design the Samurai uniform to look like something from any civilization in particular. The culture of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado is modeled on that of medieval Europe, but remember that it was essentially constructed that way by the angels. I also like to believe that they were inspired by the equipment worn by their founder, Aquila, long ago. Aquila gives us the Japanese and modern-looking elements, while Mikado provides the medieval look. That combination produces something unreal and singular amidst the more realistic surroundings. That's what I was aiming for.

When designing, I had a number of suggestions given to me. People referenced the Jedi from "Star Wars", the Shinsengumi of the Bakumatsu period, and so on. Lots of different special task forces from history and other works of fiction. With those images in mind, I was initially going to make the Samurai uniforms black. But then we have a character explicitly called the "Black Samurai", so if all the Samurai were dressed in black anyway, why would they find her conspicuous at all? (laughs) So I went back to the drawing board and came up with the blue and white scheme: blue to reference traditional Japanese style and white to symbolize the Samurai's preparedness for death.

Beyond the obvious differences between males and females, I made characters distinguishable by the color and shape of their scarves. The

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protagonist's scarf is white to emphasize the idea that it's the players' choices that essentially "dye" it a different color. White also evokes an image of "beginnings" and "limitless possibilities", making it a good color choice for this game's protagonist.

The katana in 9 may be called a katana, but it's actually a Western sword. I was asked why that is during a certain press event, and the answer is, that Mikado just doesn't have the technology to make katana blades. As explained previously, their society is filled with Japanese influence, but it's only at the level of medieval Europe. On the other hand, the Gauntlet is part of the Demonica suit, and the people of Mikado view it as hyper-advanced technology.

The outfit in 11 is worn at the start of the game. It exemplifies the modest Casualry image with its rope belt, short pants, and overall simplicity.

JONATHAN

ヨナタン

(Voiced by Hiroshi Kamiya)

A young Luxuror who, like the protagonist, is chosen to become a Samurai. His father is registered with the Monastery and comes from a good pedigree, and Jonathan himself is good-looking and accomplished in both the scholarly and military arts. He carries himself with poise and refinement befitting his station. Despite coming from a noble lineage, he isn't an elitist who clings to his status as a Luxuror. More than that, he's actually ashamed of the elitism present among his peers. He has a strong sense of fairness and justice, and he sees himself as patron and protector to the weak

Thanks to his good looks and gentlemanly behavior, people suspect that he's quite the ladies' man, but he actually has little interaction with the opposite sex. Though usually calm, collected, and wise, he betrays his innocence and becomes instantly flustered when a conversation shifts to the topic of women

Upon seeing the ruination and chaos of Tokyo firsthand, a sense of compassion and righteous indignation awakens in Jonathan, and he resolves to follow his "Samurai path" to the end. However, in this land abandoned by God, he sees that even the poverty-stricken people have not forsaken their greed, and he comes to know the true nature of humans. For that reason, he eventually sides with the true founders of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado - the four archangels - and he agrees with their ideal that Mikado should be an everlasting utopia under the providence of God. In the end, he sacrifices himself in the name of those ideals to the Chariot of God, Merkabah He gives his life in order to annihilate the demons flowing out from Tokyo.

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■ Official illustration
■■■ Concepts
■ Official illustration: Rough
■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

Jonathan is notable for his wild hair. It almost looks like he could reach in and pull out a chick or a piece of curry bread (laughs), but he wasn't going to look like this from the start. At least, it's not how I imagined him. (laughs)

Back when I was starting work on his roughs, Director Yamai brought me a picture of Brian May, the guitarist from Queen, and said, "I want to see Jonathan's hair looking like this." I burst out laughing at the picture he'd brought. But with some out-of-the-box thinking, we can justify it by seeing Jonathan as a medieval European bard or a high-class court musician, even if that's a stretch. (laughs)

After that unexpected development, his "wild hair" look was settled. There's a time and place for meticulous designing, but this sort of playfulness is important too. Jonathan's scarf is yellow, which fits with his bright personality as well as the light and hope associated with the lawful alignment. The scarf was originally going to be a way for Jonathan, as a Luxuror, to show off his refinement. As a bit of an aside, we actually hired a tokusatsu [live-action special effects] artist to create some of the demons this time around. The heroes in those tokusatsu sentai shows are always distinguished by color, so I thought we could distinguish the different Samurai by their respective scarf colors. It was an idea that came about from that collaboration, I'd say.

WALTER

ワルター

(Voiced by Katsuyuki Konishi)

Another of Jonathan and the protagonist's comrades who becomes a Samurai after passing the Gauntlet Rite. He was born into a life of frugality in a fishing village in Mikado's borderlands, and he's one of the few Samurai who comes from a Casualry background. Like other working-class people, he sees becoming a Samurai as a chance for a better life. He understands the honor of being chosen, but it also inspires in him an ambition to carve his own path and take what he wants in life.

Walter has a general dislike for the high-handed Luxurors and isn't shy about admitting it. When a conversation turns to matters of class, his discontentment with having been lowborn makes him unable to hold his emotions in check. Consequently, he's constantly at odds with Navarre, a fellow Samurai who tends to look down on the lower classes. But he feels a strong sense of camaraderie with the protagonist, who also comes from humble beginnings. Walter is crude and overly frank, causing Isabeau to call him "a savage individual". That said, his energetic independence and keen insight give him a certain charisma.

When Walter comes to know that his homeland was created out of God's warped sense of love and not as it was told in the clever propaganda he grew up hearing, and when he learns that the Black Samurai - actually the demon Lilith - plans to intervene in human society, he forsakes the empty, insolent ideals of Mikado and chooses to side with the demons, believing that "only those with strength can shift this world". Prepared to coexist with demons amidst the chaos, Walter makes good on his new ideals by sacrificing his body to the king of all demons, the angel Lucifer.

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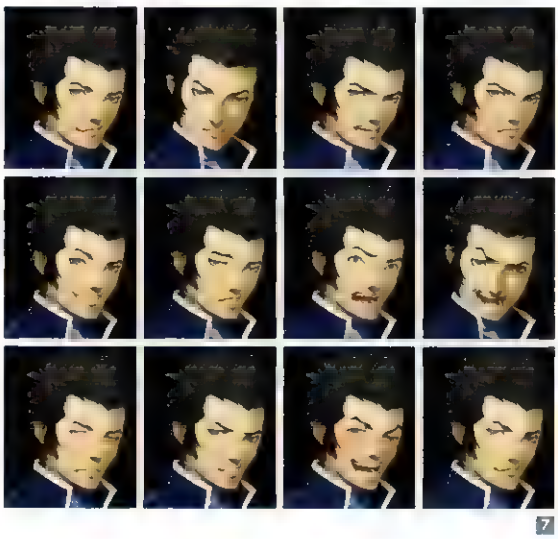

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■ Official illustration
■ ■ ■ Concepts
■ Official illustration: Rough
■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

Although more mature than most of his peers, Walter is nonetheless capable of both boundless cheer and unquenchable rage. That's the first impression I wanted to give. As a character on the chaos side of the spectrum, I drew inspiration from the punk rocker look of the "Sex Pistols"' lead singer, Johnny Rotten, and their bassist, Sid Vicious - and Yamai was totally on board with that! ...Or so I thought. The process turned out to be quite a struggle.

What I arrived at was the idea that these characters should be emoting through their eyes and mouths. With a wry smile for instance, the mouth may be smiling, but the eyes aren't. I had to think about what expressions could be communicated by various combinations of eye and mouth positions. With Walter's basic expression, I wanted a "daring smile" that makes him look like he's evaluating whoever he's talking to. It's not a straightforward smile. As a result, I think he has more sensuality and depth to him than the other characters.

Walter's blue scarf references his cool personality and his manly strength. It could also symbolize water, as he comes from a fishing village.

ISABEAU

イザボー (Voiced by Miyuki Sawashiro)

A young girl who, like the protagonist and his other friends, passes the Gauntlet Rite, making her one of the rare female Samurai. Born to a long-standing family with Monastery associations, Isabeau was set to become a nun but instead received the honor of becoming a Samurai.

Despite being surrounded by men, Isabeau isn't timid; she shows herself to be capable of winning arguments with Walter and her senior Samurai. Her talent at arguing with rash men means she often has a sharp tongue waiting for anyone who's all talk. At the same time, though, she has the capacity for deep compassion, which she shows in small ways, such as when she brings flowers to the ailing Navarre.

Isabeau believes that cleanliness is next to godliness, and as someone who admires brave, independent women, she despises those who fawn over and cling to men. The "manga" she obtains from Casualries features a beautiful female protagonist who dresses as a man named Oscar. Isabeau adores the character and reads about her exploits and love life with baited breath.

When the angels dethrone the king of Mikado and assume direct control, Isabeau shows concern for the people of Tokyo and hesitates to side with the angels. But she also feels great unease about backing the chaotic demons. Unable to pick a side, she temporarily loses her way. In the end, though, she realizes that she wants to both protect the peace in Mikado and save the people of Tokyo, causing her to split from Jonathan and Walter.

1 Official illustration
2 3 4 Concepts
5 Official illustration: Rough
6 Official illustration: Line drawing
7 Face patterns

Isabeau - the lone woman in the protagonist's group of Samurai - is the character whose design I struggled with the most. I got a number of orders for her, including "short hair and boyish", "childish appearance to contrast with mature personality", "not normal cute, but quirky cute", and so on.

4, 3, and 2 were part of a series that had differences in hairstyle and other little details. Unable to find the "quirky cuteness" I was looking for, I made attempt after attempt.

I finally arrived at 1 – a design that follows principles similar to those of the other protagonists' designs. Her hair and eye makeup are done in a Japanese style, pushing the world's originality. Her expressions tend to match the nature of her dialogue, and her sharply-angled eyes show her strength of will. To differentiate her outfit from the boys', she wears her coat draped over her shoulders. That also contributes to her image as dashing, with a mature personality. Her scarf is red and, along with her exposed thighs, contributes to her femininity. Incidentally, she's not wearing a skirt; those are actually shorts.

Her short height helps with the whole "childish appearance" aspect. She's somewhere between 150 and 155 centimeters tall. Walter and the protagonist are 175 to 180, and Jonathan is 180. So Isabeau is short enough for the protagonist to rest his chin on her head. If she makes you think "She's so little and cute!" then I did my job. (laughs)

NAVARRE

ナバール (Voiced by Shintaro Ohata)

Chosen to be a Samurai just like the protagonist, Navarre is a pure-blooded Luxuror whose father serves as chamberlain to King Ahazuya Mikado. A terribly arrogant elitist, he claims that he's by far the strongest among his Samura peers. He treats the protagonist and Walter - born Casualries - as eyesores, and he comes up with schemes to try to illustrate the differences between the classes. His plans fail, though, and when he falls into a trap set by demons, it's up to his comrades to save him from certain death. The terrifying experience shakes him to his core, and he pays a large amount of money to have his name stricken from the Samurai ranks without having accomplished anything

Though extremely prideful and vain, Navarre has no intention of becoming a Samurai who faces down real danger. He runs away after quitting the organization and is later found deranged, wandering the forest near Kiccigiorgi Village. He is saved and protected by his senior peers, but he has lost all memory of ever being a Samurai. Fearing the threat posed by demons, Navarre flees down to Tokyo and spends the rest of his years cowering in some corner of Shinjuku

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■ Official illustration
■ ■ Concepts
■ Official illustration: Rough
■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

Just like with Jonathan and his "wild hair", Navarre is famous for his "stump". (laughs) A grade-A performance by his voice actor and his comical expressions made him a beloved staff favorite.

Even the initial plan had Navarre looking down on the lower classes, and you can see how he holds his chin up high in ■. The pompadour was set by the time I did ■, and that's part of how he tries to appear intimidating. It's informative to compare him to Walter. Walter doesn't just make scary faces - he's "bad" right down to the core. He goes against the standard criteria for good and evil in the world and does what he thinks is right. But Navarre's "badness" is the more childish kind. Like, "Look at me. I'm a tough guy." The character was brought together by emphasizing that personality and incorporating his rather unusual (for the game world) hairstyle.

About the "stump"... I wanted to show how he's the type to kick people when they're down. He's not a nice guy. (laughs) For better or worse, I think Navarre's just a spoiled brat. He's been an elite since birth, so he's used to bullying those weaker than himself. He's needlessly cruel, but without any real power, he's easily defeated and fades away. I wanted to portray how that's reality for people like that.

Finally, about his scarf color... Ah. Looks like I've run out of room on this page. ...Well, whatever. (laughs)

HOPE

ホープ

(Voiced by Kazuya Nakai)

As the leader of the Samurai, Hope is called "Commander" by his underlings. He doesn't coddle prentice Samurai and is equally tough on all his charges He shows outstanding judgment and flexibility befitting a leader, and his unrefined yet solemn personality have won him the trust of those who serve below him

Hope embodies the definition of a true Samurai as he endeavors to both preserve peace in the kingdom and eliminate any demons that emerge from Naraku. He stands somewhat in opposition to the current monarch, King Ahazuya, as well as past monarchs, who have warned him that he's too blunt and sincere at times. As a result, he a so has no love for Abbot Hugo, who will change positions on a dime in order to protect himself.

Hope struggles with the decision to admit to his wards the contradiction between their mission to prioritize Mikado and the fact that exploring the Unclean Land of Tokyo is a crime (according to the first king, Aquila). He secretly believes that the kingdom's people ought to know the truth about everything, and when the protagonist's group sets off a chain of events with Tokyo, Hope decides to guide the people properly.

His refined masculinity as he leads troops into battle is all the talk amongst a certain group of ladies, including one particular Luxuror who admits her feelings for him. But there have been no women in Hope's life ever since his beloved was killed during a Naraku demon attack. Rumor has it that the ring he uses in the training missions for prentice Samurai is a memento from that tragedy

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Official illustration
1 2 Concepts
3 4 Official illustration: Rough
5 Official illustration: Line drawing
6 Face patterns

The burden of Hope's character is to portray the aesthetics of a man whose convictions force him to be left behind by the changing times.

From the start, he was to be a refined, sallow, middle-aged man. I didn't have much trouble designing him; it was smooth sailing once I came up with 3. His face is modeled after actor Eiji Okuda's, which makes for a really resolute-looking character. The development staff raised no objection to his design, probably because the Eiji Okuda inspiration was decided early on.

As the leader of the Samurai, he's the only one with a white coat. It may be hackneyed, but I like the romantic idea of a squad leader having a different color scheme from the rest of their soldiers. Some easy examples include Char Aznable from "Gundam" and the movie version of the Shinsengumi's Isami Kondo in his battle uniform. That sort of thing was drilled into my head as a kid; it's easy for a boy to see that as the epitome of cool. (laughs)

Hope's scarf is a low-saturated purple, giving him that sublime old-fashioned look. He's the polar opposite of Hugo, who's decked out in gold. (laughs)

As far as the Samurai uniforms – including the ones worn during the Rite – are concerned, you have a number of different coats (which I call "battle surcoats"). The kimono-style tops and bottoms underneath the coat don't change, though. It's possible that they have different equipment and outfits depending on the mission, and I'd like to try drawing those if there's ever a chance to.

HUGO

ウーゴ

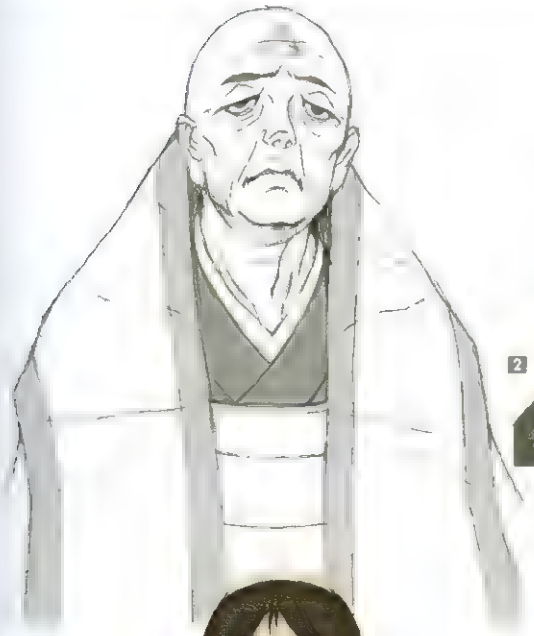
(Voiced by Yohei Tadano)

The abbot of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. The Monastery puts God's teachings into practice and guides the people, and Hugo is its leader and figurehead. He was once a Samurai himself, but he became a scholar and now prefers studying battle tactics and other academic exercises to actual fighting. Since becoming a monk, he's come to enjoy the limelight. He rose up to his current position by winning the trust of King Ahazuya Mikado.

Given that Hugo knows all of the kingdom's secrets, he zealously researches the legendary artifacts brought up from Tokyo long ago. He's in an intellectual class all his own, as he actually deciphers and learns the "mystic script", the understanding of which is necessary to fully appreciate the artifacts. When Tokyo's existence is brought to light, the Monastery officially orders the Samurai to collect artifacts from the civilization down below. Although the objects are meant to help the people of Mikado, Hugo also hopes to satisfy his own intellectual curiosity.

As a long-standing advisor to King Ahazuya Mikado and a man who tends to put his and the Monastery's power on display, Hugo takes a harsh stance against the Black Samurai, who is seen as an agitator. When the four archangels descend and dethrone the king, Hugo reluctantly serves as their mouthpiece, all for the good of the people.

Hugo has an astounding aptitude for machinery and tools that leave the other monks baffled, and his intellect is unrivaled. He also has an unusually deep appreciation for wine, and the culture of alcohol left behind in Tokyo fascinates him.



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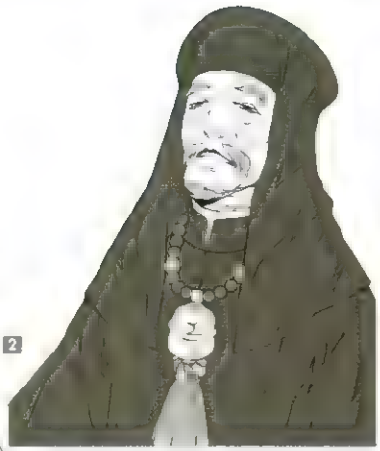

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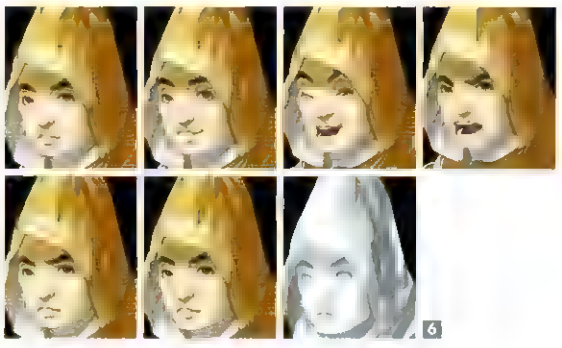

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1 Official illustration
2 3 Concepts
4 Official illustration: Rough
5 Official illustration: Line drawing
6 Face patterns

If I had to think of a sort of guilty pleasure character in this game, it'd be Hugo. He's selfish to the core and will do whatever it takes to protect himself, but in the end, he's really quite human. A wealth of fun expressions help demonstrate that about him.

He required a lot of trial and error. At first I thought he should be older (like in 3) because he's the top guy in the Monastery. But once Hope's design started taking shape, people said that for the juxtaposition of the two and to make Hugo seem like more of the upstart he is, he should be the same age as Hope or even younger. So I made him younger.

From 3 on, I modeled his face after that of a certain notorious mayor. At first I was going to give his outfit some real Japanese flair, lending him an original religious look, but then I realized that would take away from the charm and uniqueness of the Samurai outfits, so I gave him more traditional monk's garb. For the "unreal" elements, we have the shape of his hood, his emblem, and the triangle pose (representing the Holy Trinity). I wanted these to emphasize how the Monastery itself was created by the angels long ago to act as an intermediary between God and the people. I personally wanted the crest on his emblem to be the crest of all of Mikado, but there weren't a lot of chances to use it, so it wasn't selected for that purpose.

By the way, the ordinary monks tend to wear white. The gold hood that Hugo had commissioned for himself is a symbol of his greed and desire for power. (laughs)

GABBY

ギャビー (Voiced by Atsuko Tanaka)

A member of the Monastery in the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado who assists Abbot Hugo. Her distinctive almond-shaped eyes and lily white skin leave quite the impression. Gabby gives the authoritarian Hugo substantial support and guidance, and he likely keeps her at his side because he recognizes this. She tends not to show her face in public. The Casualries never get a glimpse of her, and even the Luxurors rarely see her.

As someone meant to impart to the people the teachings given by God to the first king, Aquila, Gabby is well-versed in Mikado's creation myth and history. She's also knowledgeable about the supposedly fictional demons and the forbidden land of Tokyo down below. Though her calm demeanor, gentle tone, and boundless compassion paint her as a saint, she's much colder when it comes to the deceptive Black Samurai and others who go against God's teachings.

Her true identity is that of Gabriel, one of the four archangels who guided Aquila to found the kingdom of Mikado. The angels carried the chosen ones to the heavens, and she has watched over Mikado from the shadows ever since in order to ensure that it becomes God's ideal utopia, filled with nothing but obedient, virtuous followers. The coming of the demon Lilith heralds the kingdom's descent into evil, enraging Gabby and compelling her to try and remake God's utopia once again. At the same time, humans from Tokyo - tempted by demons - invade the kingdom. To purge this threat, Gabby rallies the archangel Michael and the Chariot of God, Merkabah, to lead the troops of heaven.

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■ Official illustration
■ Concept
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■ Official illustration: Line drawing

A mysterious woman who, fitting with the "unreal" theme, is actually the archangel Gabriel in disguise. I set out to fill her design with elements that would foreshadow that reveal, but in the end, I settled on a design that doesn't give it away at all. So she embodies a "real" exterior with an "unreal" backstory.

I mentioned this on Hugo's page, but I experimented with infusing the Monastery staff's designs with some Japanese elements. You can see that in ■. Though she wears a traditional Japanese head scarf, the fleur-de-lis pattern on her cloak marks her connection to Gabriel. I was personally a fan of that design, so I think it's a shame it wasn't used.

The designs from ■ on have her all in white to emphasize the contrast with the Black Samurai. Otherwise, though, the two have similar faces, and both try to guide the protagonist. The blue highlights are reminiscent of the "Order of Messiah" from past games, and the blue-white combo is also seen in the Samurai uniforms. The coloring itself is a vague reference to that of the Temple Knights in "Shin Megami Tensei II".

I was pretty confident when drawing her, as the development staff tends to greenlight my "pretty woman" types. She was an easy character for me to draw; and I wasn't too worried during the process.

K

(Voiced by Yosuke Akimoto)

The proprietor of K's Tavern, a favorite Samurai hangout spot, K is known for the patch over his right eye and his distinctive left hand-turned-scissor. He projects an unusual aura over his otherwise grim appearance, and he has the absolute trust and respect of the Samurai and other customers who come to his establishment seeking rest and relaxation. Before he started running the bar, K - a living legend - was the leader of the Samurai. He led Hope - the current leader - and the rest of the Samurai at the time against a massive incursion of demons that was suppressed by his efforts. The loss of his eye and hand are battle scars he bears proudly, as they tell of his bravery. Even after receiving those injuries, K was said to be more ferocious than the worst demon, and Hope still can't measure up to him.

Incidentally, "K" is not his real name; it's a title he received as the bar proprietor. Successive generations of proprietors are given code letters, starting with "A" years ago

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■ Official illustration: Concepts
■ Official illustration: Rough
■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

From the very start, K was going to be a character with an eye patch and scissor hand. He's even grimmer than Hope, and given that he's a retired soldier with an impressive military record, I wanted to give his design a certain sense of depth.

The eye patch and scissor hand are meant to show the harshness of the Samurai life, so I consciously tried not to make them look goofy. The scissor in particular had the potential to just look funny, so I struggled to make it cool instead, basing it on an actual device from medieval Europe. The scissor is just an attachment, which means he can swap out different tools for the task at hand. He usually has a more normal-looking hand attachment, and he can even equip a weapon in emergencies.

For the face, art director Ishida specifically requested that I model it after Kurt Russell from "Escape from New York". As is the case with his inspiration, I think K must have been quite the looker in his younger days.

His hair is dirty blond, which is rare in Mikado. The kingdom's citizens are the descendants of those chosen by the angels, who were citizens of Tokyo. As a result, most of them are of Japanese descent, with only a small amount of non-Japanese blood mixed in. After over 1,000 years, though, the pure Japanese blood has been diluted, and most people have a mixed-race background. As a result, the average citizen of Mikado - the protagonist included - has black hair, but eye color is much less definite. There are people with blue eyes, green eyes, and other colors not seen in pure-blooded Japanese people.

ISSACH

イサカル

(Voiced by Tomoaki Maeno)

The protagonist's childhood friend, born and raised in Kiccigiorgi Village. Though Issachar and the protagonist are the same age, the former seems more like an older brother type. His simple, good-natured personality makes him well liked in the village. Like many other young Casualries, he dreams of making a name for himself, but his failure at the Gauntlet Rite sends him home in despair. With his one hope for a better life lost, he convinces himself to accept his status, but the books distributed by the Black Samurai inspire a sense of democracy in h m. Dissatisfied with the state of things, he begins to resent and oppose the Luxurors. Ultimately, he is swallowed by his hatred and becomes an undead demon. Even when fighting the protagonist, who comes to slay him in his demonic form, Issachar speaks from his heart and asks his friend to cut him down. The protagonist obliges.

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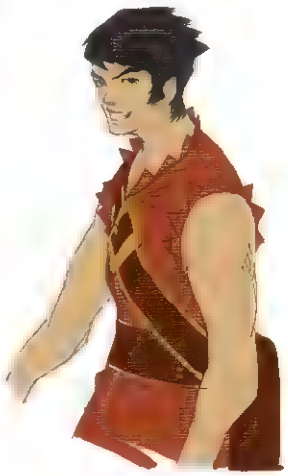

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■ Official illustration
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■ Official illustration: Rough
■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

The protagonist's good friend and a character who appears right from the start, Issachar can be thought of as the quintessential Casualry. This is clear from the fact that he's the only character seen wearing the Casualry top in his bust shot in-game.

Issachar's design was one of the hardest to figure out. I had to imagine how a "big brother" character to the protagonist would look, and it was always tough to see where I should take that. Should he look really plain? Strong? Weak? I settled on a strong-looking young man. Such a design makes for a good contrast with the protagonists' and fits well with his development in the story.

Issachar's outfit is supposed to be his attempt to look fashionable as he heads into the Gauntlet Rite. The cape over his shoulders is the most extravagant part, and it represents Issachar's burning desire to become a Samurai and take flight into the world. It's all the more heartrending when you know how his life ends.

Like the protagonist, his hair is tied up in the back. Unlike the Luxurors, he doesn't have the money to spare on fancy, stylish hairdos.

His main expression is a boastful "How do you like that?" It's all about self-confidence. His other expressions embody his rustic upbringing while also giving a glimpse of his true character.

YURIKO

黒きサムライ

(Voiced by Atsuko Tanaka)

A mysterious figure garbed in a strange helmet and armor. She appears suddenly in the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado and sows anti-establishment sentiment among the Casualries by distributing so-called "enlightenment" texts written in the mystic script. Their dissatisfaction with the system prompts their transformation into demons, sending the kingdom into turmoil.

Yuriko is actually the human form of the demon Lilith, and the leader of the Ring of Gaea. She seeks to bring about a world of destruction and chaos, where only the strong survive. To do this, she plans to first use demons to wrest control of Tokyo from the Ashura-kai and then invade the world above, expanding her organization of followers n the process.

Her goal in com'ng to the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado is to teach the people of God's deception. She aims to return humanity to a stronger, more primal form that will worship her ideals and seek her love instead of God's. To this end, she dons the Demonica suit - once used by the Counter-Demon Force - and spreads hints of humanity's true history to the people of both worlds. She also attempts to lure the protagonist's group to the demons' side, testing them over and over.

The face under the mask resemb es that of the Monastery's Gabby. That cold, perfect beauty and her charisma win her the adoration of her followers, who call her "the witch of the night"

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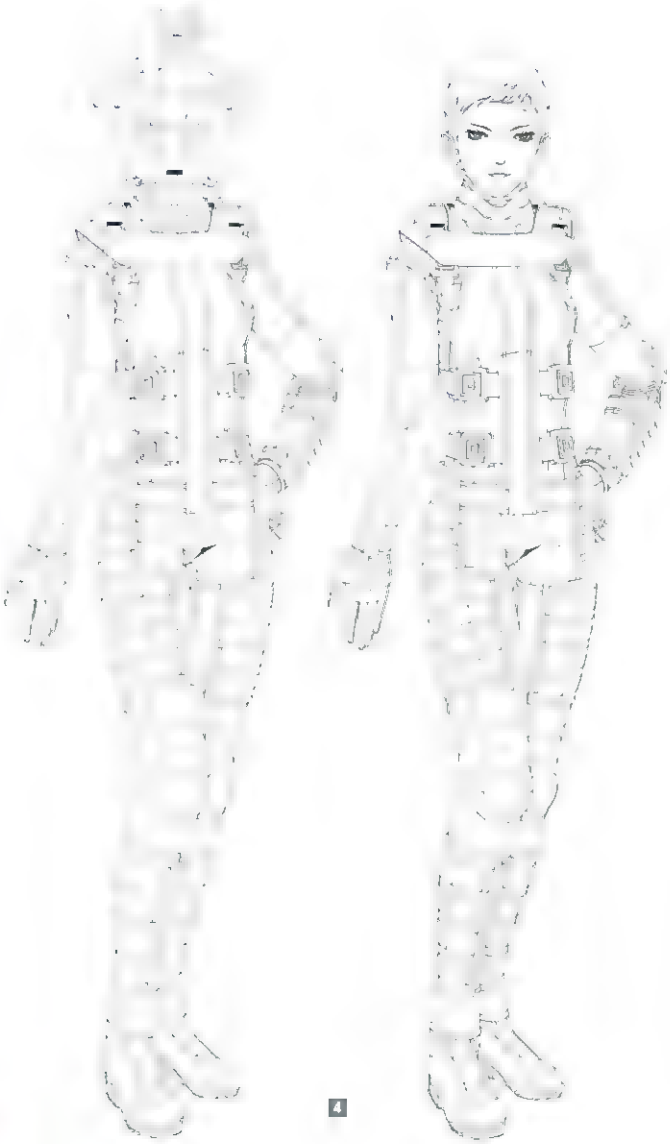

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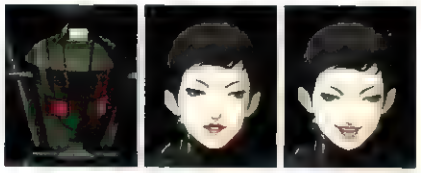

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1 Official illustration
2 Concept
3 Official illustration: Rough
4 Official illustration: Line drawing
5 Face patterns

Yuriko (the Black Samurai) is, much like Gabby, a very "unreal" character. But unlike Gabby, I did have some direction about how she should look from the very start. Her design didn't give me much trouble.

There were two key points to her design. The first was her face. I wanted to make her resemblance to Gabby very clear through facial features such as her mole, which is in the same place on both of their faces. But the two characters couldn't be more different on the inside, and I was sure to show that via Yuriko's expressions. Whereas Gabby is cold and almost mechanical, Yuriko wears a daring smile and exhibits a bewitching allure.

The second major point is her outfit. From the initial planning stages, I knew she would be called the "Black Samurai" and wear the black Demonica suit from "Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey". I wanted to stay faithful to that original design while also working in a slight difference. I'm sure some of you noticed what that was?

The answer is in the device on her left arm, which the people of Mikado call a "Gauntlet". Whereas the original version only had a single-layer monitor, this version has a double-layer one. This was added so that a forearm guard could be attached while preserving the form's overall balance. But it's still a Gauntlet, which is super-advanced technology. I wonder if that'll become a reality someday.

KAGA

カガ

(Voiced by Kahoru Sasajima)

The Ring of Gaea holds power in Ginza, and Kaga - with her jet black hair, dangerous aura, and arrogant beauty - is one of the organization's particularly influential figures. She leads her followers in a crusade to defeat the demon Xi Wangmu, who controls Ikebukuro. Her strength is comparable to that of men, and she's admired by Isabeau for that fact as well as for her gallantry and aloof superiority.

The controlling force in Tokyo, the Ashura-kai, keeps the demons satiated with "Red Pills", and when a young Kaga was about to be taken away to be used for Red Pill production, her parents saved her by helping her escape from Ikebukuro. She wandered until she found the Ring of Gaea's main temple in Tsukiji, and she grew up there under the sect's patronage, separated from her family

She aims to beat Xi Wangmu and take back Ikebukuro despite the inherent danger involved, as repayment for her parents' love for and devotion to her. The sect's other members recognize her ferocious tenacity, and even when she's swallowed by the beast, her shining final action is to strike a decisive blow from inside its stomach, leading the protagonist's group to victory.

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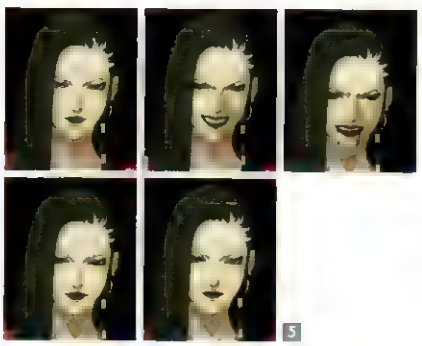

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1 Official illustration
2 Concept
3 Official illustration: Rough
4 Official illustration: Line drawing
5 Face patterns

Kaga essentially represents the Ring of Gaea, and her sprite art was actually done before her illustration. At the time, there were no plans to make a formal illustration of her because she appeared so little in the story that the sprite seemed like it was enough. But I thought that such an important member of an organization as original as the Ring of Gaea ought to have an illustration, so I started playing with the idea, eventually leading to this.

The first design I made was 3, which retains the impression of the original sprite while adding some design flair. But I kept adding more design elements, eventually ending up with the rough of the final version, 4.

First, there's her face and head. Her distinctive hairstyle has one side braided up and shaved. Her lack of eyebrows lends her a bizarre air that emphasizes her role as a member of a strange sect.

Outfit-wise, I have her wearing her kasaya [monk stole] like an artillery belt with attached hourokudama [old Japanese-style bombs]. The six bombs represent the six virtues of Buddhism.

Kaga holds her rosary beads in her right hand - not the traditional left - but she has a reason for that. To her, the rosary isn't a tool of faith but rather just another weapon to use. I tried to use details like that to show Kaga's unique way of living and the position that the Ring of Gaea occupies in the story.

TAYAMA

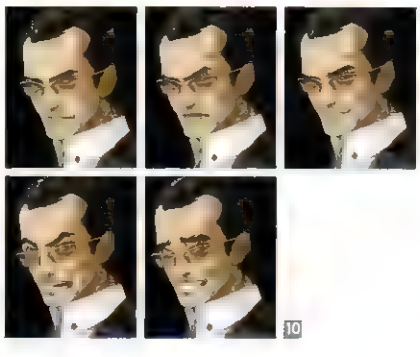
タヤマ

(Voiced by Hochu Otsuka)

The leader of the antisocial organization that controls Tokyo, the Ashura-kai. His stylish suit, piercings, and cuff links mark him as a wealthy man, but even at a glance, one can tell that he's not on the up-and-up. He stands in stark contrast to most of Tokyo's residents, who struggle even to eat. Rumor has it that he's an elite who attended a top national university and studied abroad, but in truth, he was just a low-level gangster who worked his way to the top.

The demons have allowed Tayama to claim the underground villages in exchange for "Red Pills", a source of nourishment for the demons that he produces using abhorrent methods. He's also sly enough to have gotten several strong demons to serve under him, leading many people to begrudge him and doubt his integrity. That said, his deal with the demons allows the people to live in relative safety, and his operation of the Yamato Perpetual Reactor provides electricity to all of Tokyo, lending some sense of order to life there. Though his efforts undoubtedly line his own pockets, Tayama chooses to get his hands dirty in order to build a world with humanity at its center.

He stands in direct opposition to the Ring of Gaea, which seeks to topple Tayama's current system, and he waits for a chance to eliminate the sect's leader, Yuriko, thereby assuring his supremacy that much more. Upon hearing rumors of the protagonist's group, he kidnaps a fellow Samurai and insinuates that the protagonist should assassinate Yuriko. In the end, although he thought he had control over the Yamato Perpetual Reactor, he gets sucked into it and killed when it runs wild.



1 Official illustration
2 3 4 5 6 Concepts
7 8 Official illustration: Rough
9 Official illustration: Line drawing
10 Face patterns

Tayama's design is the one I went back-and-forth with more than any other. He was really popular among the development staff, and I remember redoing his design countless times before it was finalized.

He went through a number of changes even in the concept stage. The first designs were 3 and 4, where he looks younger and like an IT-department yakuza member. After that, we decided that he should have more presence, which led to 5, 6, and 8. Note the more solid body and tougher-looking face. Ishida was a big fan of 6, and he kept pushing for that one up until the very end. (laughs)

The main reason Tayama ended up as he did is because we took a look at the overall balance of characters and realized we were lacking "cool-looking, middle-aged men". All we had were these charming supporting characters. So I switched directions in a hurry and completely redid his design.

With his good looks, expensive suit, classy apparel, and IT-department yakuza-like knowledge, he's appropriately imposing and a little scary. He was reborn as a character with all those implications.

Tayama's earring is the one unreal part of his design. It's the spiritual object linked to Yamato Takeru, one of the National Defense Divinities. Tayama took it for himself after defeating Yamato Takeru, and since then, he has worn an especially shameful expression. (laughs)

He's actually a character that left quite a deep impression on me.

FUJIWARA

フジワラ

(Voiced by Junpei Morita)

A former newspaper reporter who loves Shinjuku's Florida Café more than anything else. With his trademark fedora and sunglasses, he seems detached from the world as he tranquilly sips his coffee. Contrary to his aloof demeanor, however, he's actually a major player in the Tokyo underworld who serves as a leader in the Hunter Assoc ation.

After the ceiling was erected in the war 25 years ago, he and his friend Skins tunneled up through the Sky Tower into the bedrock of Naraku and reached the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. Their stay was short-lived, however, as a massacre by the angels - led by the archangels - forced them back down to Tokyo. Since then, Fujiwara has plotted to help the people of Tokyo immigrate to the land above. He formed the Hunter Association to breed elites who could combat the angels' forces, and he sees the arrival of the protagonist's group as a good opportunity to smooth things over with the leadership in Mikado.

Given his firm foothold in Shinjuku and the scattered rumors that he returned from Mikado alive, the all-controlling Ashura-kai attempts to keep him in check, but this doesn't seem to faze Fujiwara all that much. He's also the man responsible for two of Mikado's greatest pleasures; he started a water delivery service that would become the tavern, as well as the gambling event in the tavern that would become the Samurai quest ranking system

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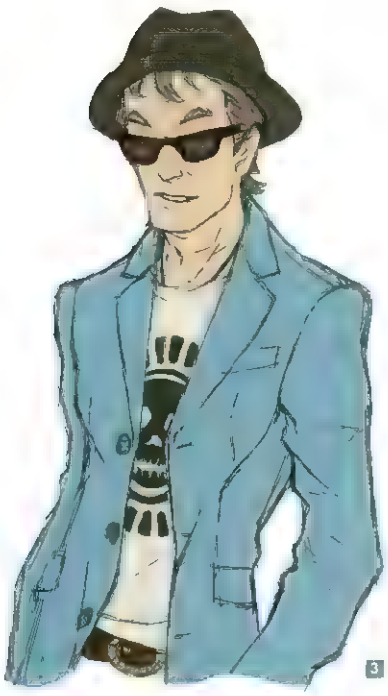

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- Official illustration
- Concepts
- Official illustration: Rough
- Official illustration: Line drawing
- Face patterns

Fujiwara manages to stand out even in a game full of middle-aged men. (laughs) With his aloof looks, he's a character with a lot of charm.

Back before we knew what his personality would be, I drew a single rough of him. Then Yamai gave me a model to work with, and we began solidifying his character. His face and style (with the hat and sunglasses) are modeled after Makoto Ayukawa from "Sheena & The Rokkets" (a Japanese rock band).

With his denim jacket and cargo pants, the look I was going for was, in a word, "casual". It's a good way of showing how, even in this savage version of Tokyo, he's in control, broad-minded, and not too worried about safety. That's because his home turf – the Florida Café and its surroundings – are watched over by Skins and a large number of Hunter Association members. Fujiwara's haunts are probably the safest places in Tokyo for that reason. (laughs)

His T-shirt has text that reads "Sun Is Dead", along with a skull-faced image of the sun. This is an homage to a line from a famous rock singer. Fujiwara and friends have been planning to escape from Tokyo ever since the ceiling was erected, but I tend to think he's sort of half given up. The protagonist's arrival sparks a new hope in him whereas before, he had just played the part of the leader trying to move people to the surface while not truly believing it could be done. That sort of cynical gap between his true thoughts and what he projects is what I was trying to portray with his design.

SKINS

ツギハギ

(Voiced by Kazuhiro Yamaji)

A burly man who hangs around Florida Café, Skins helps Fujiwara manage the Hunter Association and contributes to law and order in Tokyo. His grim combat uniform and heavily-stitched and hooded face cut an imposing figure, but he's actually soft-spoken and almost philosophical.

Skins is no stranger to death, considering that he once infiltrated the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado with Fujiwara and a group of demons. The scars on his face are reminders of the near-fatal wounds he received while battling angels. After seeing the state of things in Mikado and comparing it to the situation in Tokyo, he agrees with Fujiwara's secret migration plan.

As a military man by profession, he's one of the few remaining members of the Counter-Demon Force formed during the war 25 years ago. He's a living witness to the slaying of the demon Masakado by a young man who was the protagonist's past incarnation. Masakado became Tokyo's guardian deity after the young man fused with him to become the rock ceil ng, and since then, Skins has protected the katana that serves as Masakado's spiritual medium. But when the protagonist arrives, clearly having inherited the power of the city's savior, Skins willingly hands over the sword

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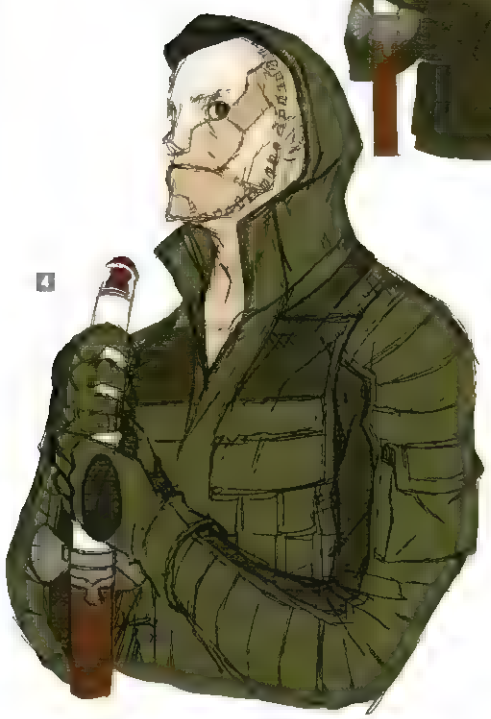

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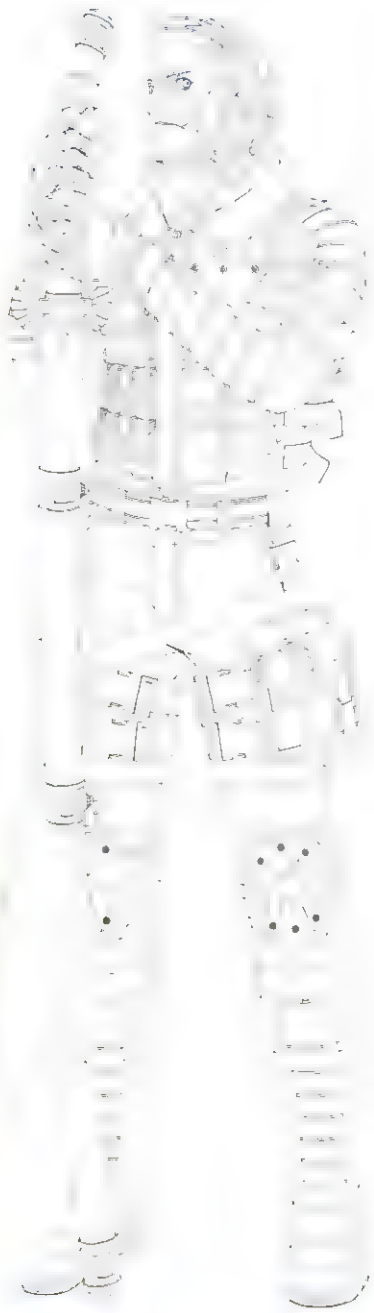

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1 Official illustration
2 3 Concepts
3 Official illustration: Rough
3 Official illustration: Line drawing
4 Face patterns

With his patchwork face, Skins is a character who really makes a strong impact. Honestly, he really scares me. (laughs) So in my illustration, I genuinely tried to make him look as charming as possible to alleviate that scariness a little.

First, the face. The wounds are obviously from some past battle, but he must have gone to a back-alley doctor who did some crude skin grafts. That's why it's all patchwork instead of being one, clean graft. I like to imagine that the pieces of skin with different shades came from different donors, likely his comrades from the Counter-Demon Force who fell to demons. That must have been pretty traumatic for him. I feel like he mentions actually doing the stitches himself at some point in the game, but I like my backstory better. (laughs)

Drawing him with a straight, flat expression would result in something really scary, so I tried to make him almost comical and charming, hence the relatively round eyes.

His outfit is a customized version of the Agent Set that I designed myself. Skins is a top-ranking member of the Hunter Association, so I wanted him to always seem ready for battle. Constant vigilance.

Then there's Masakado's long sword, which Skins carries with him. I actually borrowed the design of Masakado's sword from a past game. Did anyone happen to notice that?

HIKARU

ヒカル

(Voiced by Marina Inoue)

A young girl living in Shinjuku who prefers to wear a school uniform - an outfit seldom seem nowadays. She's oddly cheery for someone living in a ravaged world, and rather than be bashful before the protagonist and his group - who are clearly foreigners - she actually helps them now and then. She talks to people quite intimately, giving Jonathan and Walter a good impression of her, but her flirtatious and seductive ways win her Isabeau's enmity.

She seems like nothing more than an ordinary girl at a glance, but she's somehow familiar the influential Fujiwara and Skins, and she frequently visits their base in Shinjuku's Florida Café. As Fuiwara plans his revolution, Hikaru acts as an intermediary between him and the protagonist.

Her true identity is none other than that of the fallen angel, Lucifer. She bides her time in human form, watching over Tokyo while waiting for a chance to exact revenge on the other angels. She is fully revived when the protagonist's group opens the gate to the Expanse, and she sets out to exterminate the four archangels who have taken control in the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. To that end, she absorbs Walter to become the true king of all demons.

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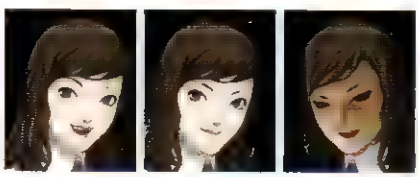

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■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

Hikaru is competing for the spot of "most mysterious character in the game" – and she's definitely in the top two. At a glance she looks like an ordinary high school girl, but I bet the fact that she runs around the ruined Tokyo in a school uniform and acts all flirtatious made a lot of players say "Huh?"

I didn't use a specific model for her face; I was just going for the simple, unadorned cuteness of high school girls nowadays. Natural, without dyed hair or tons of makeup. Her bright and cheery disposition creates a real gap when her true identity is revealed.

Thanks to a recommendation from scenario writer Yomai, her outfit is modeled off the uniform of a certain famous, private girls' high school. The goal, again, was to contribute to that mismatched feeling by putting a "real" high school girl in the middle of this ruined world. The effect is eerie. It wouldn't be the same if she was just cosplaying a high school girl from some anime, so I think we made the right choice. I wanted to give some indication that she's actually Lucifer, so I included the symbol of Venus ("The Morning Star") on her jacket crest and buttons. It's barely discernible, so that was mostly just for me. (laughs)

As an aside, the character poses in the illustrations for this game are supposed to look rather commonplace, like from everyday life. Not having anime-esque action poses and gags was one more way of keeping that "realistic" theme throughout.

KIYOHARU

キヨハル

(Voiced by Hiroshi Komiya)

A man living in one possible future, in a desertified Shinjuku made barren by nuclear warfare. He's always at his handmade altar praying for the advent of the messiah.

Kiyoharu's speech and actions paint him as an eccentric, but he was once a promising young student at a famous private school. Twenty-five years ago, though, the demons attacked, and he took up his sword and joined the Counter-Demon Force to protect humanity. Like most of the humans left behind, Kiyoharu was abandoned - he was not one of the chosen ones carried away in the cocoon. Even so, his faith in God remains.

The others whom God left behind have nothing but criticism for Kiyoharu, and he's spent the past 25 years harbor ng a deep sense of guilt The years have withered his body, leaving no trace of his former vitality. Those who weren't alive back then see him as a key figure from the war, but they also give him a wide berth.

When the protagonist's group suddenly appears wielding the long-lost demon summoning program, Kiyoharu proclaims them to be messiahs. He introduces them to his comrade, Akira, and they fulfill Kiyoharu's long-held wish by saving humanity.

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4 Official illustration: Rough
5 Official illustration: Line drawing
6 Face patterns

Kiyoharu is a character from an alternate world where the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado doesn't exist. He is a prototypical "law" character (one that fans of the series should be familiar with), but in a world without heroes, he's essentially a failed one. Kiyoharu is near the end of his sad, cruel life in this desertified, ruined version of Tokyo.

Design-wise, the blue robe and cape portray him as a religious saint, while the withered face and too-long hair indicate that he's lost his former vitality. The crosses drawn all over his body paint him as a man of faith, but they're also there to ward off demons. The unorthodox nature of such a scheme is a good sign that he's lost his mind to some extent. The Tyrant Pluto's poison is the cause of his decrepitude, having eaten away at both his body and his mind. Kiyoharu is only supposed to be in his mid-40s, so he shouldn't really look this old. I think both the poison and his excessive piety can explain that, as they've both worn away his sanity. In my mind, he was once like Jonathan - a genial young man with a strong sense of justice and morality...

His face, whether expressionless or somewhat ghastly, is meant to show his insanity. The fact that he's no ordinary person isn't communicated so much by his expressions, but by his strange and bitter dialogue, so I didn't design too many face patterns for him.

AKIRA

アキラ

(Voiced by Hozumi Goda)

Akira, a human, lives in a version of Tokyo made barren by an "act of God". He's a reliable leader who supports Kiyoharu (who awaits a messiah) and who has inspired his fellow humans over the past 25 years. His is a world without the threat of demons, but in order to restore humanity to its former dignified state, he endeavors to defeat the Tyrant Pluto, even as poison wracks his body. The protagonist's group helps him bring Pluto down, and he declares his intent to revive Tokyo as the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, even if it means relying on demonic power.

The transformed Akira lives in a violent potential world engulfed by flames, made that way after the extermination of the angels. Like many other humans, he sought power and decided to fuse with a demon to become a demonoid. Though he wields some power as the boss of the Kasumigaseki area, the true powers in Tokyo see how he vacillates and view him as insignificant, calling him "trash scavenger Akira". His dream is to become the King of Tokyo by defeating the demonoid Kenji, who makes his base in Ichigaya. That goal is motivated by more than fame or power, however. What he really wants is to create a relatively safe and equal society for the people of Tokyo.

It's clear that either version of Akira is destined to become "King Akira" and found the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado. Both are also visited by tragedy when, in the nuclear war, Akira's older sister dies after being spirited away by the angels. Even in the "real" world, a boy named Akira lives in Tokyo and waits for the return of his sister, who was taken up to the heavens.

1

■■ Official illustrations
■■ Concepts
■ Official illustration: Rough
■ Official illustration: Line drawing
■ Face patterns

Another major character from the potential worlds. Whether in Blasted Tokyo or Infernal Tokyo, both are future versions of the same character.

First, the Blasted Tokyo version in ■ covers up as much skin as possible to protect against Pluto's poison. His design was modeled on that of the unnamed NPC sprites. He has escaped Pluto's death sentence and is essentially imprisoned underground, so I tried to incorporate the essence of the stripe pattern found on prison uniforms.

Next we have the version from Infernal Tokyo, ■, which is Akira after he's become a demonoid. The concept behind this design is our most primitive image of demons. Ancient tribes would cover themselves in white body paint and burn demon-warding talismans to drive away evil spirits.

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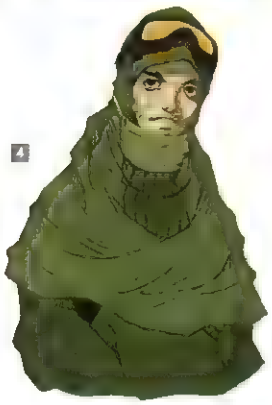

4

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Both versions share the same eyebrows and the same facial scar. Even though the two differ in many other ways, I wanted those characteristics to make it clear that they're the same person. I varied their expressions to show the very different lives they've led in their respective worlds, but their common tendency to cock one eyebrow is a charming detail that I toyed with.

No matter which world Akira lives in, he's a natural-born leader who never loses hope. He's a great guy who - no matter what trials lie ahead - never succumbs to grief and never stops moving forward. If I ever get the chance, I'd love to try drawing "Mikado Akira".

STEPHEN

スティーヴン

(Voiced by Cho)

A man in a wheelchair who often appears before the protagonist. He warns of coming danger, offers assistance, and - enigmatically enough - even speaks as though he knows of the protagonist's strange dreams.

Stephen is actually the developer of the demon summoning program and one of the few people who knows that the world was split in two when Tokyo was nearly destroyed in the war 25 years ago. He is, in effect, Burroughs' father, so while she calls Gauntlet users "Master", she calls him "Doctor". Whether the protagonist opts for order or chaos, Stephen isn't concerned; he only cares about reuniting the worlds, so he appears once again to rescue the protagonist from the Expanse. He explains that the protagonist is the reincarnation of Tokyo's messiah and offers advice on rebuilding the worlds.

1

1 Official illustration

Many players should recognize Stephen from past games in the series, but did you know that he actually had an original design? I designed the Stephen for this game while browsing through "Kazuma Kaneko Works III" [unreleased outside of Japan]. As such, the only thing I really added was the new wheelchair, so I don't have much to say about his design otherwise; I can only talk about the angle I was going for and the points I watched out for.

Just like with the Black Samurai, I was careful not to ruin the sense of balance. What do I mean? Well, if I just took the original concept and put my own spin on it, it'd come off as fan art; as something very different. That's why I stressed this "balance". There are all sorts of elements I paid attention to in order to capture the essence of the original character, like his hair volume, facial proportions, facial features, and the way he carries his body. By preserving the balance of the original concept, my own personal touches come off even more subtly. All that self-important pontificating aside, I'm really just happy if series fans don't feel that he's out of place.

Finally, the wheelchair was useful because, while the character himself didn't change, alterations to the wheelchair design were the perfect way to bring him into this new game with a "fresh" look. I was essentially going for a blend of modern and antique. Don't you think that's fitting for the seemingly ageless Stephen?

BURROUGHS

バロウズ

(Voiced by Yuko Kaida)

The "fairy living inside the COMP" who resides within the Gauntlets worn by the Samurai. She functions as a helpful partner in all tasks, but only for those who are compatible with the Gauntlets. Users call her Burroughs, and every Samurai's Gauntlet, in fact, contains a "Burroughs".

She's actually the operating system AI for the demon summoning program that was developed long ago. She's familiar with Tokyo's civilization, customs, and seemingly "magical" artifacts, and tirelessly educates the Samurai about them.

Burroughs' AI personality is honest, faithful, and good-natured. She jokes, engages in innocent banter, and will even compete with other Burroughses over their respective masters' accomplishments. She's designed to be surprisingly affectionate. The program was originally made to show her as a young woman, but ever since the ceiling was erected, she has taken on the appearance of the ever-wandering goddess of Tokyo.

Official Illustration

Finishing up the character illustration section is Burroughs, who is often called the game's heroine. She's very popular not just with the development staff, but also among players. Her strangely charming lines and Yuko Kaida-san's wonderful voice performance make her an alluring character.

I actually wasn't assigned to draw Burroughs until late in production. Until that point, the user interface screen just had a generic female silhouette, and that didn't seem to bother most of the staff. I happened to ask Ishida when we'd be swapping in her actual design, and he said that he wasn't even sure who would be designing her... so the task fell to me. No use crying over spilt milk, though... even if that ended up being the rope that hanged me, given how busy I already was. (bitter laugh) It's fine because I honestly wanted to draw her, but I've noticed recently that I quite often tend to leap before I look...

The basis for her design is the goddess of Tokyo, who appears at the end of the neutral route. That's because Stephen originally designed her in the goddess' image. When drawing her, I was sure to emphasize the silhouette and not include too many details. As a purely digital entity, she needed to look simple, mostly to distinguish her from all the other characters. She's also kind of abstract-looking, which allows players to envision her in their own way. I'd be glad to know if that was the key to her popularity.

OTHERS

1 2 3

4 5 6

■ Concept: King Ahazuya Mikado
■ Concept: Monk
■ Concept: Samurai organization (during Rite)
■ ■ ■ Concept: Luxurors

I prepared these roughs in order to promote Ishida's view of the game world and as references for the sprites. With the Luxurors in particular, I was going for a certain historical quality.

■ is King Ahazuya Mikado, although he never appears like this in the game. I couldn't come up with a specific European time period to base his outfit on, so I just went with the stereotypical king look.

■ is a monk designed before Hugo and Gabby were finalized. His outfit is based on that of monks in the Dominican Order.

■ are Samurai at the Gauntlet Rite. The Samurai wear a special outfit for the occasion, as the rite is also a coming-of-age ceremony. The Japanese-style patterns on their helmets are modeled after eboshi.

■ shows a young Luxuror with a basic outfit. Luxuror clothes are florid in order to differentiate their wearers from the Casualries. The number one difference is in color. While Casualries wear darker, subtle tones, Luxurors show off their wealth by wearing bright and gaudy colors.

■ [illegible] meant to be a non-Samurai sentinel. This one's design sense was later repurposed for the Mikado Set equipment, and these sentinels were never actually used.

■ shows the king's chamberlain. Navarre's father would wear clothing like this while performing his duties.

NPCs / TOWNSPEOPLE

EASTERN KINGDOM OF MIKADO

TOKYO

OTHER WORLDS

EQUIPMENT

Mikado Black

Mikado Wood

Mikado Sand

1 Mikado Set

Ahazuya Gray

Ahazuya Blue

Ahazuya Set 2

Ahazuya Red

1 Mikado Set

The equipment of the Eastern Kingdom of Mikado, and the first set of equipment I designed. I based it on medieval European lamellar armor, making it a light piece of armor to be used early in the game. With both the Mikado and Tokyo equipment in this game, I wanted to almost ground them in reality and keep them from being too over-the-top. There's a lot of symbolism in this equipment, and I wanted it to resemble equipment that looks like it might have actually existed.

2 Ahazuya Set

The superior version of the Mikado Set. The barrel helm, chainmail, and overlying surcoat were used until around 1400 A.D. and tend to symbolize Crusaders. I personally love those primitive-looking, bucket-shaped helmets. (laughs) You'll notice a crest on Ahazuya Red. At the time, I was actually planning to have two more crest designs.

Plain Knight

Blue Knight

Red Knight

3 Knight Set

Blood Duke

Green Duke

4 Duke Set

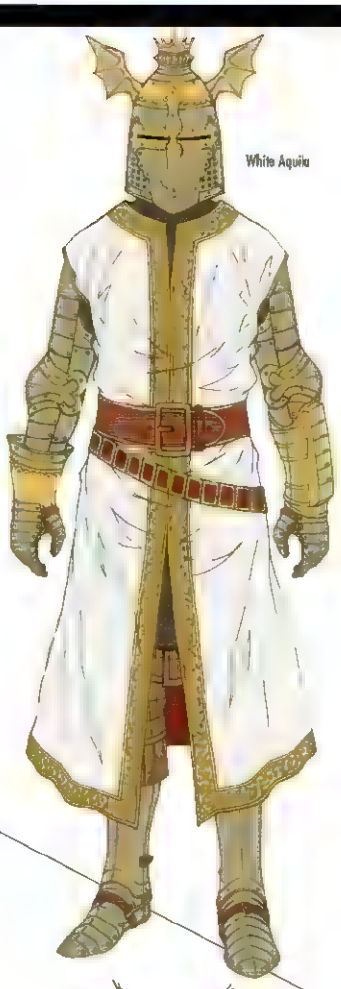
Silver Duke

1 Knight Set

Of the heavier armor sets that belong to the same family as the Mikado and Ahazuya Sets, this is the lowest-ranking one. It had much stronger fantasy design elements early in development. When I was put in charge of equipment design, I started going for more realistic looks, and in this set too, I tried to trace the evolution of real armor throughout the ages.

4 Duke Set

The Duke Set is a superior version of the Knight Set, and historically, the former actually came about after the latter. It's supposed to look like the standard and widely-used armor of the so-called "medieval knight". Knights at the time would fight on horseback, so the armor's weight wasn't a problem, but I bet the protagonist doesn't have an easy time running around wearing this set. (laughs)

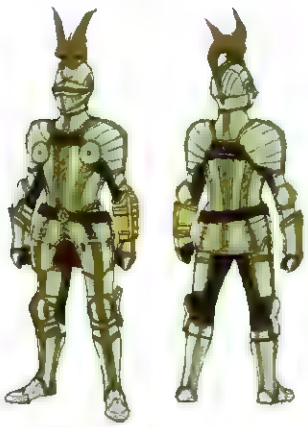


White Aquila

Gold Aquila

Black Aquila

5 Aquila Set



White King

Blood King

Black King

King Set 6

5 Aquila Set

As the high-level set in the Mikado line of equipment, I gave this one ceremonial- and royal-looking features. It's got an ornate barrel helm, a surcoat, and plate armor. Like with some of its fellow sets, you'll notice a camo pattern, which obviously didn't exist in actual medieval times. I just imagine that the pattern was passed down through this world's history. As for the blood spatter pattern, it was at first meant to indicate a strengthening effect via demon blood.

6 King Set

The highest-level set in the Knight line. The design is filled with showy details, but the most notable aspect is the dragon on top of the helm. There are many examples from medieval Europe of knights adorning their helmets with various decorations to indicate their rank, heritage, or identity. It's a pompous way for a knight to show pride. It's hard to imagine soldiers nowadays heading to the battlefield wearing those sorts of decorations, huh?

Green Sneak

Yellow Sneak

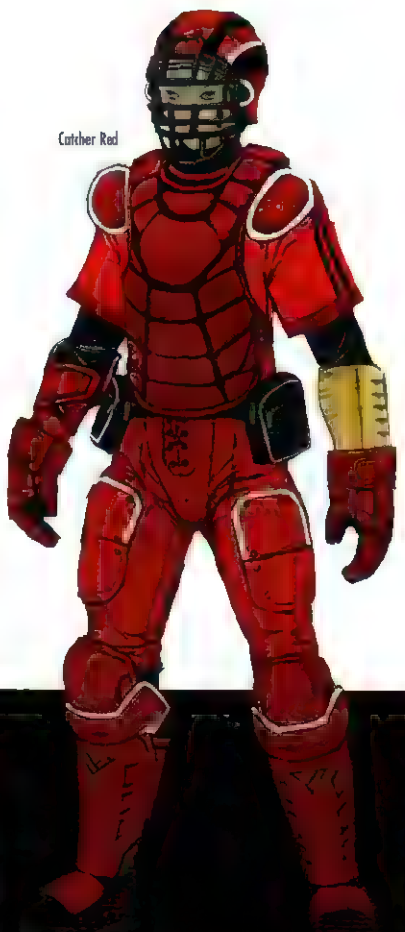
Blue Sneak

7 Sneak Set

Catcher's Set 8

Catcher Blue

Catcher Brown



Catcher Red

Sneak Set

This set is one of the first to show up in Tokyo. There's something vaguely military-esque about it, but it's also pretty casual, with a T-shirt and shorts. The coloring also represents the branches of the military, with green for the army, blue for the navy, and yellow for the air force. This set provides the base for the line that includes the stronger Agent and Stealth Sets.

Catcher's Set

Early on in development, we had a lot of sports-themed equipment sets that would appear in Tokyo. I imagined that residents of Tokyo - in their attempt to survive - would use equipment like this (which was on hand) as makeshift armor to protect themselves. The Catcher's Set embodies the idea of modern equipment used as armor, and it really stands as a piece of unique flair in this game.

EQUIPMENT

Survival Cream

Survival Olive

Survival Purple

Survival Set

Casual Pink

Casual Black

Casual Set

Casual Blue

Survival Set

As the name implies, this costume used in mock combat exercises in real life makes an earnest return. It's an efficient set close to the kind used by modern soldiers, so it makes perfect sense for it to be used when one's survival is on the line. The guy in charge of modeling, Aoyagi, actually had free reign in designing this one, because he's familiar with this type of outfit.

Casual Set

Equipment with an emphasis on "casual". Up top you have a mountain parka and a tactical vest, while the pants are split into parts and reinforced, like the type meant for outdoor activities. The lightweight wool cap offers minimal cranial protection. The bold pink variation was made with female players in mind, as well as to emphasize the protagonist's somewhat androgynous nature.

Camouflage Olive

Camouflage Sand

Camouflage Gray

11 Camouflage Set

Black Rider

Blood Rider

Rider Set 12

Silver Rider

11 Camouflage Set

This design totally comes from the outfits worn by Japan's Self-Defense Forces. I imagined that people in the game's version of Tokyo would've found these sets lying around. The olive, gray, and sand color variations are faithful to the actual versions used for ground, desert, and city combat. It would've been easy to include too many of these "actually-used-for-combat" equipment sets, so I had to be wary of keeping a good balance.

12 Rider Set

The Rider Set was designed to look very "turn of the century". Whenever you see someone looking like this in American comics, you can be sure they're bad. The design was originally going to be simpler, but as I worked on it, I got the urge to make it look even more dichéd. The spikes and chains all give it this brutal look and really set the mood. A lot of the staff members loved this set and used it regularly.

Yasha Soldier

Magura Soldier

Murasame Soldier

Soldier Set

Yoi Bushi

Reimei Bushi

Bushi Set

Tosogare Bushi

Soldier Set

The first equipment set I designed as a supervisor. This set came about from an order to include a Sengoku period outfit in modern Tokyo. In order to justify it being used in a modern situation, I like to imagine that while the historical armor protects from attacks to some extent, there's also military-grade body armor being worn on the inside. The legs, too, have an interesting blend of East-meets-West, with the modern boots covered by traditional greaves.

Bushi Set

A superior version of the Soldier Set. This is another costume that, like the Soldier Set, combines traditional armor with modern elements, like the belt and ammo pouches. I wanted to emphasize that this was a higher-class armor set, so I included the collar, the shoulder guards, the tassets over the thighs, and so on. Incidentally, I absolutely love traditional Japanese armor.

Kintoku Daimyo

Mokutoku Daimyo

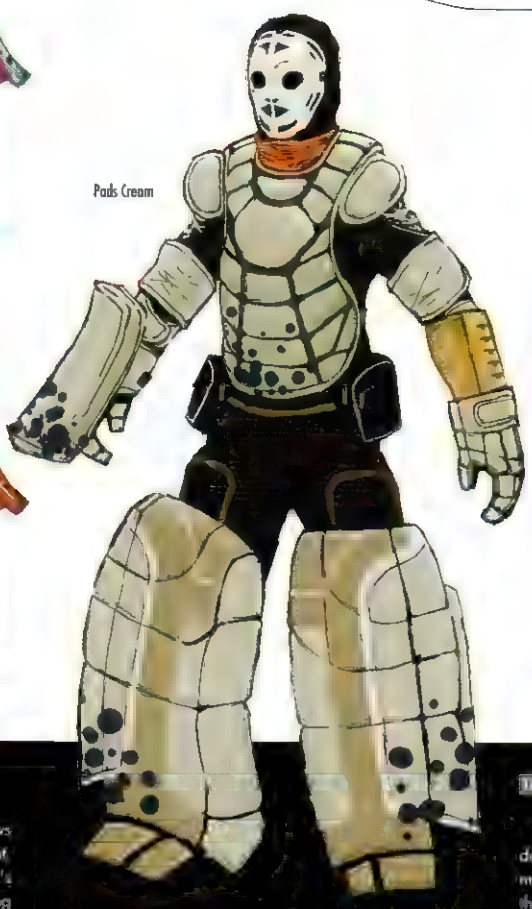
Katoku Daimyo

15 Daimyo Set

Pads Magenta

Pads Tricolor

Pads Set 16



Pads Cream

15 Daimyo Set

The highest level of the Soldier/Bushi line shows off its status with its great helmet and battle surcoat. This design isn't based on a particular daimyo's clothes; it's just a generic daimyo outfit. But during development, I toyed with the idea of including a "love" crest on the helmet. When it comes to the traditional armor in the game, I bet a lot of it is fake or obtained illegally, but I like to think that the Daimyo Set was stolen from an actual museum.

16 Pads Set

With its added protectors, this set is a defensive step up from the Catcher's Set. Just making it strong would have been boring, though, so I added a horror element via the mask, which everyone associates with a famous killer from the movies. The mask itself is a fan favorite, as it adds a surreal touch to all sorts of other equipment sets. A lot of the development staff used this one, and Yamai in particular put in an order for more sets in the same line. (laughs)

Hero Green

Hero Gray

Hero Red

17 Hero Set

Agent Y

Agent G

Agent Set 18

Agent B

Hero Set

This one continues the Rider line, but with more protectors, like in motocross. It also has elements from tokusatsu movie heroes. I call it "Kame Rider"! (laughs) The motifs on the belt buckle and back aren't supposed to be grasshoppers; they're turtles ["kame" means "turtle" in Japanese]. Unlike the villainous-looking Rider Set, this is supposed to be straight-up heroic-looking, and the staff had a lot of fun making it. I also happen to love it, personally. (laughs)

Agent Set

A higher-level version of the Sneak Set. The protector-covered bodysuit looks like the kind worn by real special forces, and the Middle Eastern keffiyeh adds an exotic touch. You might expect this sort of equipment to have stealth-oriented coloring, but I went with bright and flashy colors. The idea was to project an image of toxicity and intimidation, much like sub-tropical reptiles.

Dark Stealth

Sky Stealth

Red Stealth

19 Stealth Set

Bunny Set 20

Bunny Brown

Bunny Green

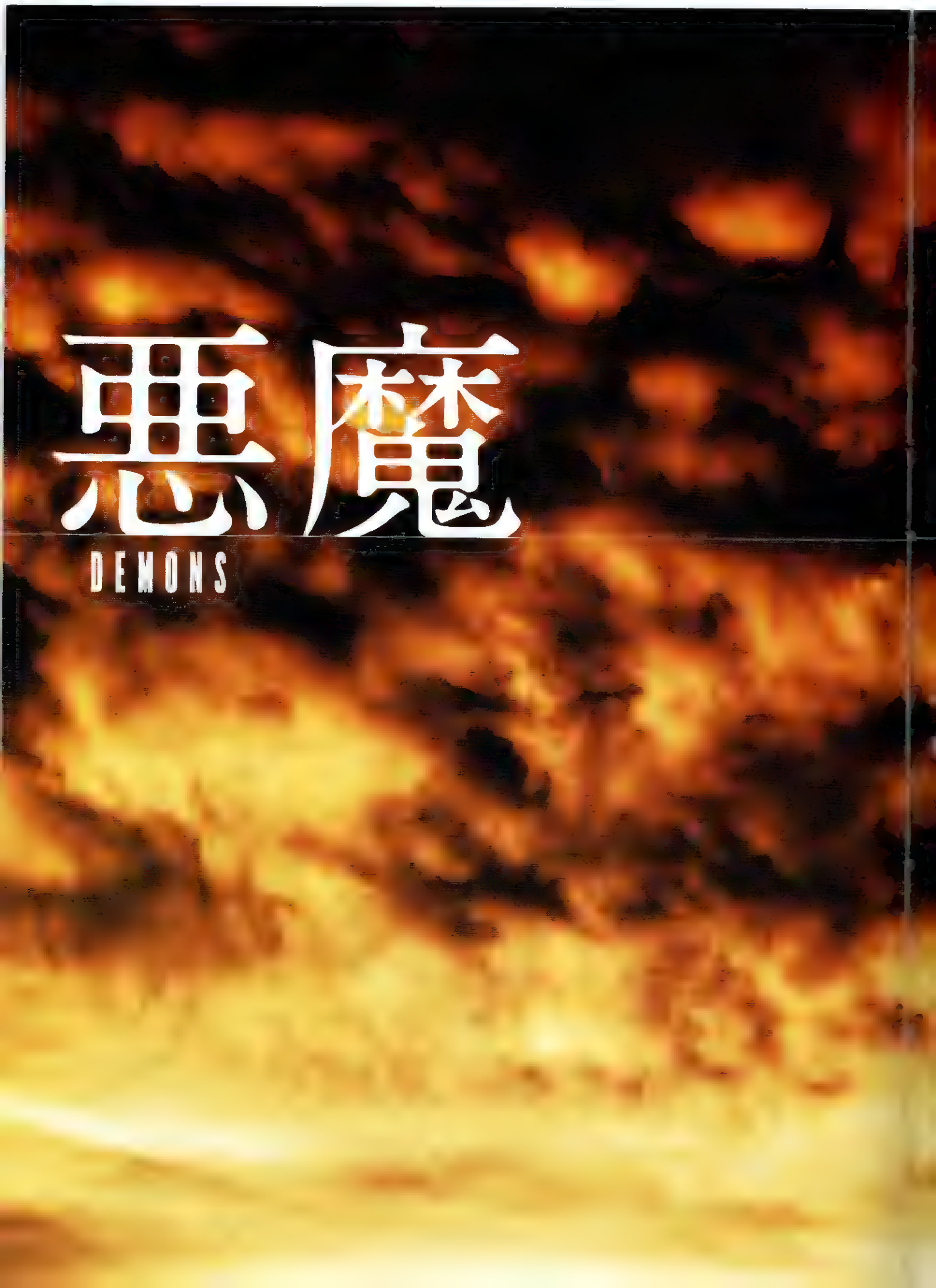
Bunny White

Stealth Set

I designed this one imagining it as one of the strongest equipment sets in the game, while at the same time making sure to distinguish it from the similar Demonica combat suit. I used actual next-gen special ops combat uniforms as a base, which is why this set includes night vision goggles. Unlike the Demonica suit, this resembles cutting-edge equipment in the real world. It's way too expensive for anyone to actually buy, though. (laughs)

Bunny Set

This was born from a desire to increase the variation in head equipment. The concept was "killer bunny". (laughs) With the blood splatters and almost poisonous color schemes, you can see some of the "pop" and violence ubiquitous in American comics. It fits the MegaTen world well, but I still feel it's something we haven't seen before. (laughs) When Yamai put in the request for this, he also asked for a "killer clown".


悪魔
DEMONS

New Forms for New Demons

Comments by the artists

NEW FORMS FOR NEW DEMONS

The illustrations and models found in this section are the artists' original creations, so they may differ from the demons found in-game. We hope you enjoy seeing the demons as they were at the moment of their creation.

TAMOTSU SHINOHARA

(→P. 148)

[ON GETTING THE REQUEST FOR DEMON DESIGNS]

One day I got an email out of the blue. It already had a proposed workload, delivery dates, and the whole schedule, and it was basically asking me "You want the job?" They were still keeping the title a secret, but honestly, if I'd known it from the start, I feel like I wouldn't have accepted. I'm not a person who plays video games, so I knew next to nothing about the "Megami Tensei" series. But I am a fan of Kaneko-san (I have all his art books) and I can understand well enough the appeal of the characters he creates. That made the job all the more intimidating. It would've been great if I'd acted cocky and said, "I'm gonna surpass that Kaneko-san!" but in reality, all I could think about at first were ways to give them an indefinite answer or turn down the offer completely. (laughs)

[ON THE ORIGINS AND BACKSTORIES OF DEMONS]

Most of my demons have their origins in myths and legends from around the world, so it was up to me to emulate those templates while adding to them with my own, new interpretations. I was provided with text descriptions and basic materials right from the start, so all of a sudden I was expected to nail down my own materials to the greatest extent possible. I was sometimes expected to prioritize certain elements in my designs, but by no means was that always the case. I also never had to research new materials, at any rate.

MINOTAUR

Luckily for me, the "Megami Tensei" series has typically taken a relatively straightforward approach to the interpretation of the Minotaur. So I decided to come at it like a change-up or perhaps a slider that somehow just barely makes it into the strike zone. The popular image of the Minotaur is the human/bull hybrid of myth. I didn't want to stray too far from that, but at the same time, it would have been easy to settle for some vanilla interpretation. Working the human face into the bull face is an old, familiar trick for me, so that part wasn't tough. Usually with these hybrid types, the human face gets all the attention. But here, the bull face also draws the eye, so I made the human face a skull instead because people quickly lose interest in what's familiar to them. If people's eyes still wandered to the massive bull head at that point, that would be all right. When it came time to do the body, there was an inevitable clash between the overlapping silhouettes of the bull head and the human body. Normally I would think about how to blend them together nicely, but this being a change-up, I thought, "Why not have one 'wearing' the other?" So I left all the contours intact. The bull part started to look almost buffalo-like, so I gave the whole design a savage and rough feel to it. At that point, all that was left to do were subtle, minor adjustments. The process involved a lot of "This is a little too much," or "This doesn't have that MegaTen feel to it." I went through that give-and-take until arriving at the final design.

NAPAEA

I didn't really know anything about the origins of Napaea; all I had to work with were the text materials that referenced a "fairy of the valley" and "young woman". What came to mind was Ango Sakaguchi's poem, "A dryad and the spirit of a valley." Of course there's no apparent connection, but from that, I arrived at the idea of a beautiful young girl immersed in pus or venom or something. The vague concept of "disgusting, yet beautiful". But given that the request asked for a "fairy" and a "girl", I had some idea of what they were expecting: not "dripping with pus", but "venomous pop art". So I shifted away from the "disgusting" idea. I was also lost on how to handle the face. Pictures of demons should all have them looking aloof, right? Like someone hard to talk to? I tried to honor that idea, but in the end I realized that I'd already broken convention by moving away from the "disgusting" motif, and that I might as well break convention all the way through to the end. So I gave it my all to make her look flirtatious. I mean it when I say I gave it my all, too, since that's not a type that I draw very often. (laughs)

DULLAHAN

This one comes from Irish or Scandinavian myths, and I wanted to keep the armor and helmet motif in place, but it took a lot of trial and error to keep her looking feminine. That was achieved mostly with the wings on the helmet and the golden scales here and there. There's also an image of Dullahan as a god of death, but when I tried to emphasize her femininity in that case, she just ended up looking like a witch, so I scrapped that angle. I kept running into trouble when doing this work, and at those times I'd say to myself, "Why doesn't this look like Kaneko-san's work!?" (laughs) When I began to reflect on what that essential difference was, I concluded that with my own art, I tend to add tons of details to human figures. It's always more, more, more. But Kaneko-san's illustrations, if I may be so blunt, are more about what's not there. Like he has said, "Once I get this right, I won't add anything else." There's this element of subtraction, almost. In that way, he gets his point across and nothing more. That's not the only difference, of course, but it's a big one. In that sense, the "point" of Dullahan is that her head is severed from her body. The design needed to be filtered down to that. Nothing else really mattered, and I was mindful of that, but when I finished, I almost felt like I'd left too much out... It has a sense of balance that I'm not used to, so it's no wonder I felt uneasy with it. But adding new elements where I'd already stripped elements away would completely defeat the point, so instead, I decided to try playing with that essential "head severed from body" point. Because she's wearing this classical Western-style armor, I started to think of bisque dolls and the joints in their necks. So I made her neck into a ball, with her head acting as the socket. That revision certainly fit the atmosphere more, but it just wasn't interesting enough. So I warped it even more by making the ball joint look like one from a cheap action figure, and I was finally satisfied.

KOGA SABURO

As he's the same Koga Saburo from the Japanese classic, I knew I had to use the snake motif somehow. But as a character, he's supposed to be a dark hero, so I couldn't completely do away with the slim, humanoid silhouette. In that sense, I got away from the popular image of him as a "snake man". I started off with the humanoid form at his core, wrapped in long, thick, snake-like belts. I also covered him with other sinister-looking elements. The idea to have his arms separate and float came from that line of thinking. Suwa Grand Shrine is associated with the legend of Koga Saburo, and its resident deity is Take-Minakata who, in the stories, became a snake god when

his arms were ripped off by Take-Mikazuchi. That also gave me the idea for the floating arms. Those two aspects (ominous elements and floating arms) were distinct and separate at first, but by starting with the ominous elements, I eventually got to the arms, and everything blended together rather well. The protuberances on his back were originally supposed to be scabbards, but at some point they turned into fangs. I had a lot of trouble deciding how to tackle his eyes and mouth. At the very end, after much struggling, I decided not to give him any facial features at all. More than anything, that was because he's armless. What I mean is that if I'd given him a proper face, that would call attention to the missing limbs. But my intention with the arms was not to make him look crippled or inept, so by leaving him faceless, it makes him look less like a natural organism.

TENKAI

Out of all the orders I received, this was the first one I drew. The outer texture was supposed to be the only non-human thing about him; I was going to make it look like stone or wood or something. But then I started worrying if a texture like that would even be visible with the 3DS's relatively low resolution. I decided it would probably just look like an indistinct, solid-color lump, so in the end I colored him normally. The lines all over his body are supposed to indicate physical hardness, and I emphasized that further with highlights. The image I was going for was basically "a monk who's turned into a stone statue over the years". The silhouette resembles a fairly ordinary humanoid, so the only altered aspect is that surface texture. By de-emphasizing the design, I was able to devote more attention to the drawing itself (how the lines flow, overall balance, etc.). This being my first time stepping foot into the world of "Megami Tensei", I was constantly searching for a way to match my own drawings to Kaneko-san's... or at least a way to make them settle in among his without standing out too much, artistically. Despite my efforts, though, that never really worked out. (laughs) Anyway, this demon's design is clearly that of a warrior monk. Some stories have it that Nankobo Tenkai (this demon's inspiration) was in fact Mitsuhide Akechi in disguise, which is why I have him wearing a mask to hide his true, human face. The parts that look like cat ears are actually supposed to be horns hidden underneath, the point being that even a devout monk can turn into an ogre if he obsesses about something enough.

CHEMTRAIL

Chemtrail was a completely original creation, so I had a lot of fun coming up with his design from scratch. That said, I didn't have complete freedom; the goal was to come up with my own straight interpretation of what a demon in the "Megami Tensei" series should look like. What I came up with was "a nude old man running around with smoke pouring out of his head". (laughs) The smoke would be reminiscent of primitive machines, which seems to fit the demon theme, right? I'm honestly not so sure whether I was right about that or not. The story behind this demon is an urban legend conspiracy, so I thought it might be good to include "new world order"-esque elements, like a pyramid with an eyeball on his stomach. But I worried that might cause problems later on, so I scrapped the idea. During the cleanup stage, I thought it might be fun to use 3D CG for the mechanical parts. After a quick bit of modeling, I liked what I saw, so I decided to apply that to the whole design. I'd played with the idea of giving him a metallic texture from the start, so it made sense to render the entire final image that way. So I don't actually have a line drawing of this one. I began to trace out the drawn design in my head - thinking that it would be worthwhile to have both versions - but I came up short and stopped trying. Sorry...

ANCIENT OF DAYS

This was an original demon for the most part. I was given keywords like "the tank of God" and "U.F.O.", so I set out not to be restricted by the humanoid form, going more for an objet d'art evocative of the Ophanim angels. After doing my first six designs, I took some time away from the work and saw the revealed design for Raphael. "Ah, so this is the direction Amemiya-san's going in," I said. (laughs) My own design... didn't really jive with his at all. But I wanted them to look clearly connected, so I reworked Ancient of Days into a more planar-looking, floating emblem type of thing. But its silhouette ended up resembling some of Amemiya-san's yet-to-be-revealed designs, so I had to go back to the drawing board again. (bitter laugh) I guess that's just how it is when you're an apprentice. Anyway, I abandoned the planar idea and reworked it again into a chandelier-shaped, decorated U.F.O. Going along with the Ophanim theme - which has four as a key number (four beasts, four wings, etc.) - are the chandelier's five candle holders, positioned in a star or circular shape, each blowing through a trumpet that heralds good fortune. Well, the one in back is obscured by the central body. (bitter laugh) Having only four visible is okay, but then they start to seem squarish, like the one in back is just way too small... A star shape would have been good for the U.F.O. theme, but giving it six points would evoke an image of the Star of David, which has different implications altogether, so I avoided that. I was going for "ancient alien" with the central body; I accomplished that by using a mishmash of elements taken from those ancient murals and frescos that make people say, "These kind of look like aliens."

SANAT

This guy is supposed to originate from Ancient of Days, so all of their elements stand in contrast to one another. Note that Sanat is highly asymmetrical, and he has something like a wheel at the bottom (as opposed to the floating Ancient of Days). The figure at the center was meant to resemble the pagan "thousand-armed Goddess of Mercy", but... applying that literally proved impossible. So I settled for about one hundred arms. Sanat is a sage from Hindu mythology and said to be godlike, but I was opposed to making an enemy character look like a god. I wouldn't want any religious people out there to look at this and say, "Hey, that looks like my god. Sacrilege!" So I tried my utmost to steer away from any particular religion or god and instead came up with a mix of different motifs. In that sense, I didn't want the design to be straightforward enough for anyone to be able to definitively say "These are his arms" or "This is purely decorative." So I tried jumbling everything up, but without any consistency, the design wasn't really coming together as a character. So then I made the entire thing resemble a torso, with his left side in particular having a tiki element as well as traditional African tribal masks lined up totem pole-style. Those might also represent gods, but I figured it wouldn't be a problem because the people of the South Seas (who worship tikis) are so easy-going. (laughs) Color-wise, I gave Sanat a blend of different colors reminiscent of the random spray paint style of those old zombie dolls.

YASUSHI NIRASAWA

(→P. 156)

[ON THE ORIGINS AND BACKSTORIES OF DEMONS]
When it came to these demons with origins in mythology, I made an effort to use their traditional elements, but only after deconstructing them and putting them back together again. Like with Centaur, for example; people usually think of it as a half-man, half-horse, but I didn't go in that direction. Or in the case of Medusa, I made the typical snakes coming from her head out of chains and bones. In that sense, these aren't necessarily the mythological creatures everyone is familiar with.

CENTAUR
I really aimed to do something different from the stereotypical centaur. I avoided the usual half-man, half-horse form and instead adorned the torso with two fighting unicorns. Even with that strange form, it still looks like a "horse person", doesn't it? Or maybe not... (laughs)

MEDUSA
I strayed from the stale fantasy image and went for more of a modern, punk look for Medusa. Her trademark hair snakes are redone as chains and skeletons, and the skulls of her prey are crammed into her lower body.

ASMODEUS
This guy embodies majesty and strength. I drew upon a mishmash of inspirations for the king of greed, so he turned out simple-looking but still strong... at least that's what I was going for. His body is covered in the skulls of red demons, and he's got rings and keys dangling from his bony protrusions.

MICHIZANE
The overall image is a suit of armor made of bones. Some kind of organic energy - represented by electricity - binds all of his pieces together, and his arms and legs can stretch out as long as they stay in range of that electric power. I do a lot of designs that have a person dwelling inside the monster or creature, but I managed to break free of that trend with this one.

LUCIFER (FIRST FORM)
He's supposed to look high-class and stylish. His pearl white leather suit casts off purple, green, and gold light, giving him a sublime look... Unlike human limbs, his are frighteningly long, and his particularly demonic-looking left arm harbors some kind of "egg".

LUCIFER (SECOND FORM)
The left arm... I never expected it to turn out like this, but I got a request from my supervisor saying, "So sorry to spring this on you, but we'd like this design to reflect the fact that he's fused with Walter, so maybe you could include Walter's spiky hair or blue scarf or something like that...?" The explanation was reasonable enough, so I said, "Sure, let's do that." (laughs) So you'll notice Walter-kun's traits in the final design.

MASAKADO
Because his size is so important, I focused all my energy on communicating how giant he is. So there are mountains, waterfalls, forests, and cities all over his body. His right arm is made up of hands sprouting into smaller hands and so on, like a fractal, while his left hand is formed from hundreds of trees twisting together.

KYOUMA AKI

(→P. 163)

[ON GETTING THE REQUEST FOR DEMON DESIGNS]
I got the request to do this game when I was working on creatures (demons) for "Persona 4". I was sure it would be hard, because awhile back, a friend of mine pulled tons of all-nighters while working on a strategy guide for a "Megami Tensei" game. Watching him take the occasional nap, I thought for sure that my best course of action would be to take on work just for the experience points (in other words, be an assistant). (laughs) But I managed to put the deadlines and stress out of my mind, and I breathed a sigh of relief when I turned in the assignment. Then I just had to sit back and wait in anticipation of seeing how they were going to use each of the characters.

[ON THE ORIGINS AND BACKSTORIES OF DEMONS]
First I met with the supervisor in a café, then I played the game for three or four hours, and finally I attended a lecture on the game's story. After that, I would upload roughs that communicated the necessary information in my own way, and then I would redo them a few times before landing on the final design. In the event that there was some motif from a real-world mythology to use, I would create a 1/6 or 1/7 scale model (either a single one or multiple) and then give them clothes or CG effects to fulfill the necessary requirements until the image was sufficiently distanced from the original inspiration. What that distance should be really varies from design to design, but I can tell you that it's hard to stick the landing when you're talking about a G-level difficulty (the highest difficulty level in competitive gymnastics). (laughs)

KUEBIKO
He's a giant inspired by the keywords "earth", "vegetation", "Japanese-style", and "spirit". As Kuebiko - god of the fields, agriculture, and earth - his right arm is cracked mud, his left arm is sand, his torso is rocks and crags, and bound rice plant roots sprout from his head. His main motif is a scarecrow, but that tends to make one think of something that belongs in an American B-horror movie. That wasn't what I was going for with this design, so I didn't think a B-horror movie pose would suit him well... When I went back and tried to improve on this design, I aimed for something more like a scarecrow on steroids... Anyway, you can see how he turned out

YAMATO TAKERU
The keywords I received for him were "Yamato Takeru" [a Japanese historical/legendary figure], "angular hair", "magatama jewels", "ancient Japan", "cracked earthenware" and, redundantly, "Transform!! ...A bit". For the rough I submitted, I also included "young man", "male", "assassin", "divine sword Ame-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi" (Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi), "top-brass villain in a transforming hero movie", and "National Defense Divinity" (that sounds so cool). I made his arms and legs puffier in a redo. I really wanted to design him as a dark hero. By slotting the magatama jewels from his buckle into Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi, he can pull off all sorts of special moves. If the jewels on his chest tend to the left, he's an enemy. If they tend to the right, he's an ally. If both sides sink into his

body, he turns gold and enters hyper-mode... That's everything I've come up with. (laughs) The demons are going to be voiced, so I hope that makes communicating their personalities through the images even easier.

KENJI, KING OF TOKYO

At a meeting we had about Kenji, I was told to incorporate the keywords "face", "destruction", and "revival", and to emphasize "red lines". I designed him to look as different from the others as possible, but at the time, a certain sentai series had a similar-looking character... (laughs)

ASTAROTH

The keywords were "androgynous man", "top-brass villain in a transforming hero movie", and "medieval nobleman + figure", but the question I struggled with was, "Where do I put the person in all this...?" The mask and purple lipstick take care of the androgynous aspect, and I decided to put the human figure out front, wearing the dragon part like armor. Maybe he didn't even need a scabbard? I kind of wanted to have him sheathe the sword directly into the dragon's stomach. Like when he powers up with his wings!...or something. From far away, it might even look like the sword is the dragon's fangs or tongue. The only really hard part of this design was getting it to fit on a standard piece of drafting paper.

YOSHIHIRO NISHIMURA

(→P. 167)

[ON GETTING THE REQUEST FOR DEMON DESIGNS]

I was surprised when they came to me for this, because I'd only ever done modeling for movies. Amemiya san is an example of a movie director and designer who started out in games, but I still had to wonder if I was right for the job. So I had a long meeting with the people in charge, and the deal was sealed when they - as fans of my movies and those of Noboru Iguchi - begged me to do it. I'm not great at drawing, and most of my work in movies has been with sculptures (which are easier to present on film), so that's the route I took here. I was the only demon designer for this game who designed with sculpture. The finished products on-screen actually look really three-dimensional, so I'm glad I decided to do it that way.

[ON THE ORIGINS AND BACKSTORIES OF DEMONS]

First off, mythology has always been a source of inspiration for my imagination. Legends come about when a tale is passed down and embellished over the generations. So for this project, I would start with the source material and then ask myself, "How would my grandmother describe this in a bedtime story?" and "How do I patch together these interpretations?" That was my design process.

OMOIKANE

Omoikane is supposed to be an intellectual. He's really smart, and you can never guess what he's thinking. With that in mind, I pictured a monster made of a mass of cranial nerves, holding generations' worth of scrolls, and that led to the final version. I was aiming for something that doesn't really have a concrete body; something that could only really be done with CG if it was in a movie. Bundling the wire to create its form was actually very difficult, and I struggled with that. But Omoikane is actually my favorite of the demons I did. His weird form is perfectly suited to sculpture.

PLUTO

I grew up enjoying the works of Osamu Tezuka, so when you say "Pluto", I inevitably think of Astro Boy. But the theme of this Pluto was "a massive structure", so I designed him as a poison spewing nuclear reactor combined with an organic being. I wanted him to look nigh-unbeatable. Most of his body is actually buried underground, so I wanted players to look at my design and say, "I think this is only one part of this guy." I especially wanted to imbue his more "structural" parts with the idea that he's a real y nasty guy. (laughs)

YASO MAGATSUHI

At first I imagined him as a giant, but then I decided to insert some of my unique Japanese flair and a bit of humor into the design, imagining him instead as "a demon that used to be a big person". The final version looks like he's dragging a stone coffin, but I actually meant for it to be a kago (palanquin) from the Edo era. Anyway, I really did want Yaso Magatsuhi to look funny. So I tried to make him especially ugly, distinguishing him from my other designs. So he's both funny-looking and scary. The problem at the time was deciding on an expression. More than with the others, with Yaso Magatsuhi I really tried to incorporate my typical design sense, and I think he came out well.

KEITA AMEMIYA

(→P. 171)

[ON GETTING THE REQUEST FOR DEMON DESIGNS]

When I got the offer, I was a little worried about whether or not my art style would fit the series, but I agreed to join when it became clear how many other designers were participating. I always sense a sort of beauty in "Megami Tensei" characters. I drew a whole bunch of rough designs when searching for that "beauty" in my own way, and the higher-ups decided which direction I should go in.

[ON THE ORIGINS AND BACKSTORIES OF DEMONS]

The idea that machines, weapons, and other man-made things could be included in the "gods and demons" umbrella really whet my creative appetite. Needless to say, Kazuma Kaneko - the father of form and design - really dealt the coup de grace, but it was nonetheless a successful team effort that I was happy to be a part of.

[ON HIS DESIGNS]

I tried working organic-looking machinery into the otherwise orthodox forms, faces, torsos, and arms of my god characters... that was the goal. In order to differentiate the four archangels from each other, I was sure to give them subtly different color schemes and varying forms. The biggest challenge was making sure my design images were usable as illustrations in the game itself. The two types of art are fundamentally different things, but they were essentially the same this time around. Most of my designs and illustrations are usually just used in my own work, so getting these requests and then seeing my designs brought to life was thrilling and a lot of fun. I'd love to take on a challenge like this again if I get a chance.

Designer

篠原保

Designer:
TAMOTSU SHINOHARA

Character designer and 3D CG illustrator Worked on "Choujinki Metalder" in 1987 through his connection with Kenta Amemiya Since his official debut, "Power Rangers Turbo", he's designed characters for "Kamen Rider" and a number of Super Sentai and other tokusatsu series as well as anime and games

BEAST

MINOTAUR

NEUTRAL

TAMOTSU SHINOHARA

FAIRY

NAPAEA

NEUTRAL

Designer

篠原保

GHOST

DULLAHAN

CHAOS

DRAGON

KOGA SABURO

CHAOS

Designer

篠原保

FAMED

TENKAI

NEUTRAL

FIEND

CHEMTRAIL

NEUTRAL

Designer

篠原保

GODLY

ANCIENT OF DAYS

LAW

CHAOS

SANAT

CHAOS

Designer

菲沢靖

Designer:
YASUSHI NIRASAWA

Master sculptor, character designer and illustrator. He made his debut as a freelance illustrator in 1984, working as an assistant to Makoto Kobayashi, but he went independent in 1990 as an illustrator and sculptor. Since then, he's gained acclaim in Japan and abroad for his work in a range of genres and mediums, including tokusatsu series, films, anime, video games, comics, and others.

YOMA

CENTAUR

LAW

FEMME

MEDUSA

CHAOS

TYRANT

ASMODEUS

CHAOS

FAMED

MICHIZANE

NEUTRAL

TYRANT

LUCIFER (FIRST FORM)

CHAOS

TYRANT

LUCIFER (SECOND FORM)

CHAOS

Designer

菲沢靖

GOD OF DESTRUCTION

MASAKADO

CHAOS

Designer

秋恭摩

JIRAE

KUEBIKO

NEUTRAL

Designer:
KYOUMA AKI

A manga artist. He's best known for "Demon Beast Society" and, under the pen name Shin'ichi Kuruma, "Battle Royal High School". He also worked as a character designer on the tokusatsu series "Hikari Sentai Maskman" and "Choujuu Sentai Liveman", as a mimetic beast designer for the anime "Godannar", and as a creature designer for the game "Persona 4".

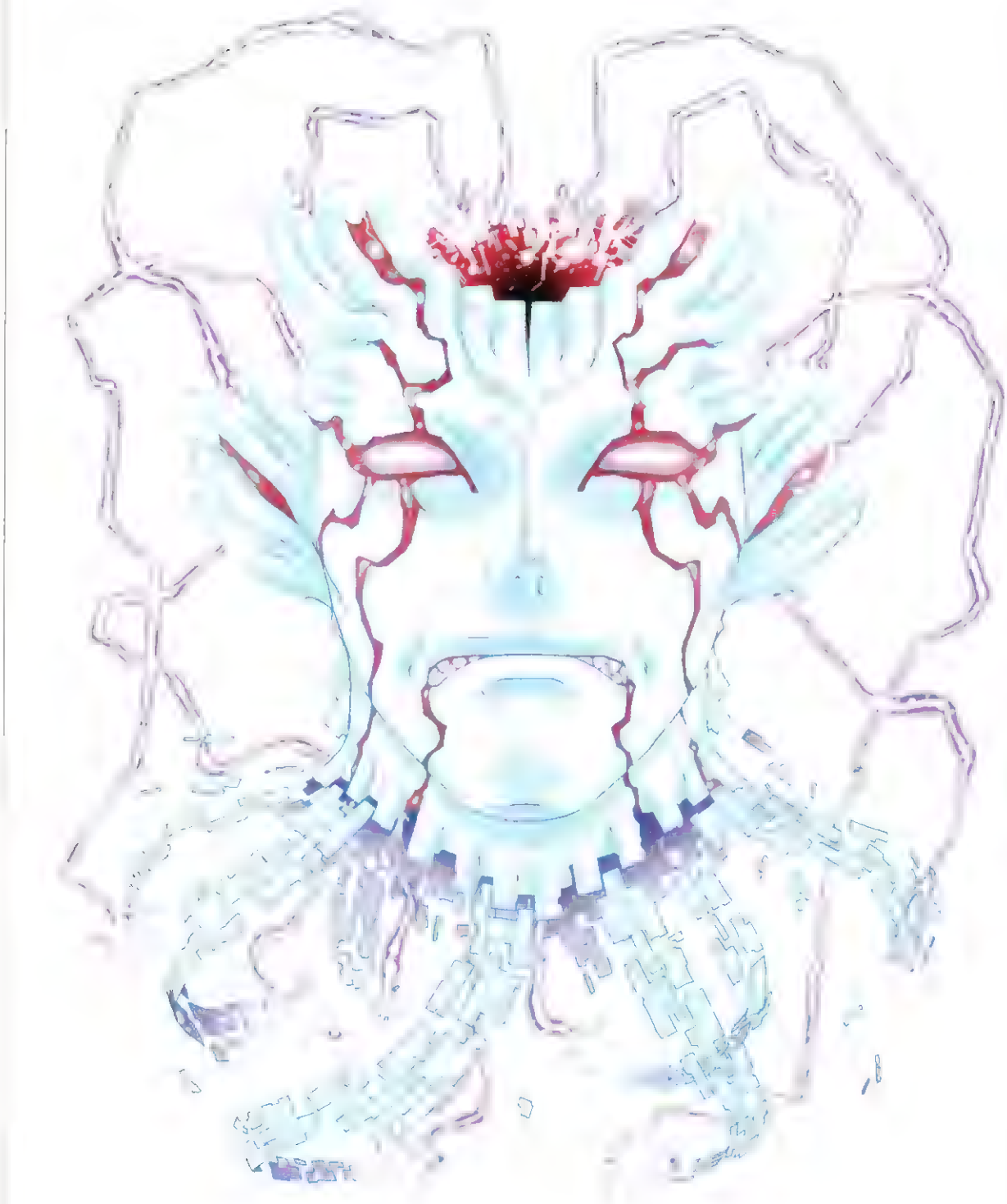
Designer

秋恭摩

FAMED

YAMATO TAKERU

NEUTRAL



KING OF TOKYO

KENJI

CHAOS

Designer

秋恭摩

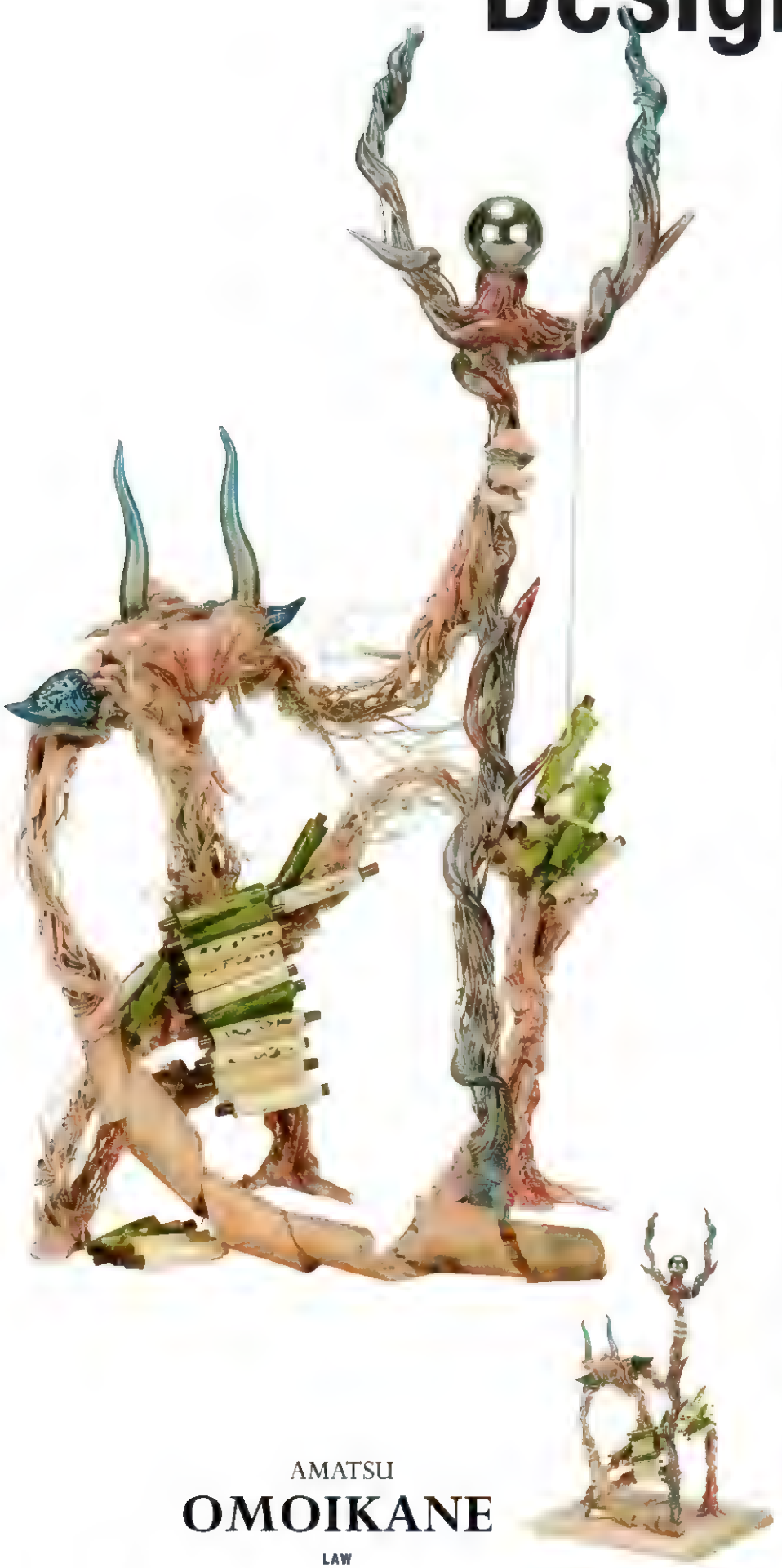
TYRANT

ASTAROTH

CHAOS

Designer

西村善廣



AMATSU

OMOIKANE

LAW

Designer:
YOSHIHIRO NISHIMURA

Film director, screenwriter, and special effects makeup artist. He's worked on films, TV dramas, commercials, plays, and other stage events, showing his many talents in directing, art directing, lighting, special effects makeup, and sculpting. Some of the films he's directed, including "Tokyo Gore Police", "Vampire Girl vs. Frankenstein Girl", and "Mutant Girls Squad", have even won awards at film festivals outside of Japan.

Designer

西村善廣

TYRANT

PLUTO

CHAOS

MACHINE

PLUTO SOLDIER

LAW

Designer

西村善廣

VILE

YASO MAGATSUHI

LAW

Designer

雨宮慶太

NIGHT

LILITH

CHAOS

Designer:
KEITA AMEMIYA

Film director, illustrator, character designer, and manga artist. He's worked on countless tokusatsu productions and has been highly influential on other artists. His directorial debut was the movie "Mirai Ninja". He's also known for the more recent tokusatsu series "Garo", and for his work on a variety of productions as a character designer and art director.

Designer

雨宮 慶太

ARCHANGEL

MICHAEL

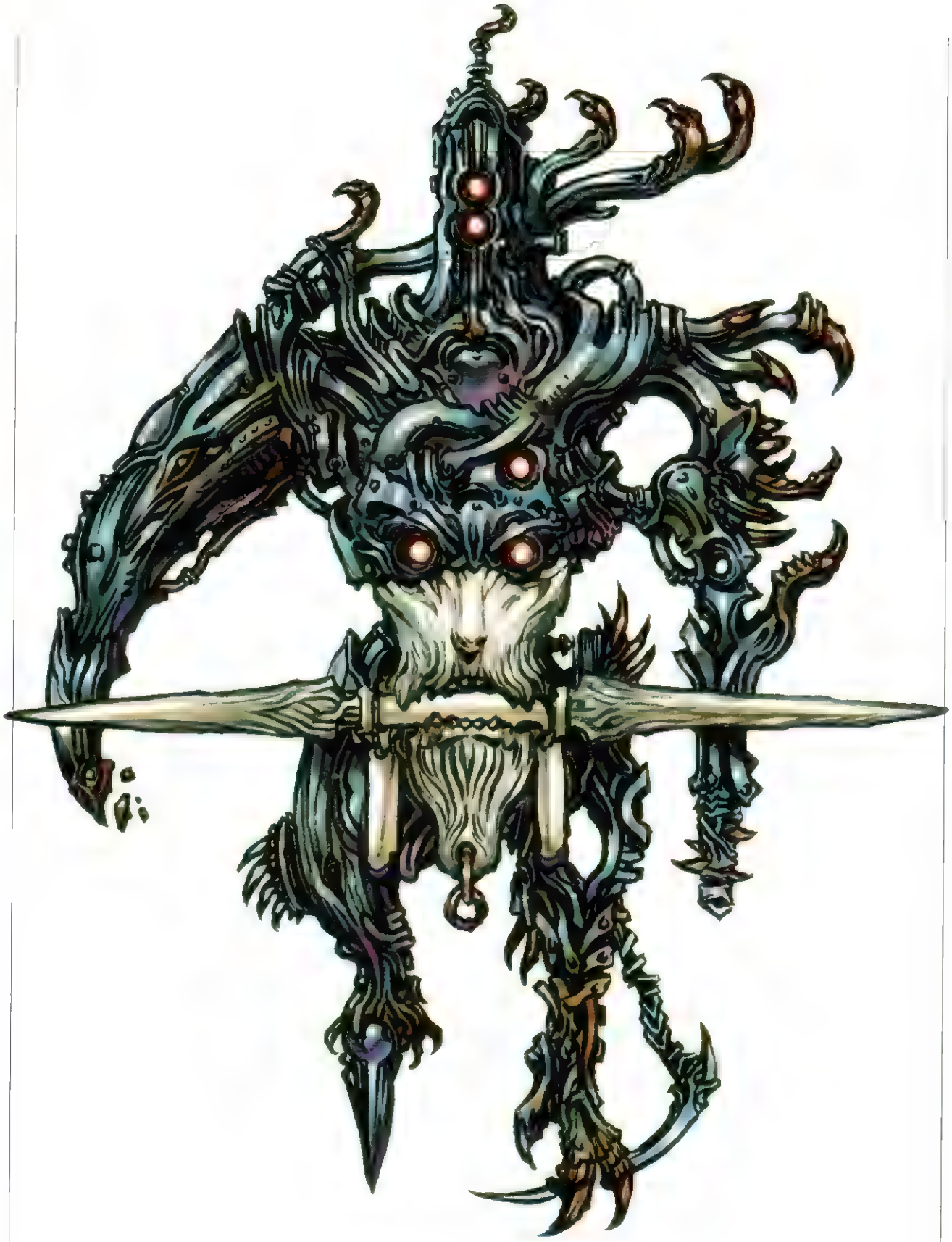
LAW

ARCHANGEL

RAPHAEL

LAW

ARCHANGEL
GABRIEL
LAW



ARCHANGEL

URIEL

LAW

ARCHANGEL

MERKABAH (FIRST FORM)

LAW

ARCHANGEL

MERKABAH (SECOND FORM)

LAW

KEITA AMEMIYA

無題
UNTITLED

A Gift from Shin Megami Tensei IV to Our Fans
Present from Shin Megami Tensei IV to You.

"SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV"
BREAK TIME

INTERVIEW WITH
EIJI ISHIDA AND MASAYUKI DOI

We've already got a generous helping of comments from the both of you regarding the parts you played in creating the art found in this book. So, Ishida-san and Doi-san, for this interview, we'd like to focus more on who the two of you are, as well as some of your stories from the development of this game.
BOTH: Gladly.

First, your respective career histories and profiles. Your careers are by no means a secret to the public, but as this is the first art book the two of you have worked on, would you mind elaborating for our readers? (laughs)
ISHIDA: You really think there are readers who care about that? (laughs)

Of course there are! (laughs) I mean, how much of your personal lives are you willing to make public?
DOI: Ask me anything. I'm an open book.
ISHIDA: Well, I'm not giving out my home address. (laughs) But it's fine if people know my Twitter handle.

Oh, we don't need to know that much. (laughs) Anyhow, let's start with Doi-san's senpai, Ishida-san.
ISHIDA: Starting with me, huh... I was the art director for this game. I was born on November 14th, 1974, which was the year that "Ultraman Leo" aired. My blood type is B, and I was born in Joetsu City, which is in Niigata Prefecture. Yasumi Matsuno, who worked on "Ogre Battle" and "Final Fantasy Tactics", lived in the next city over.

Why do you sound so proud about that? (laughs)
ISHIDA: He's kind of a hero back where I grew up. (blushes) And Hashino-san - the producer of "Persona 4" [hereinafter referred to as "P4"] - is from the neighboring Itoigawa City.

How many years has it been since you joined the company?
ISHIDA: I'm going to dodge that question for now. (laughs)
DOI: It's my sixteenth year, and I think it's Ishida-san's seventeenth. He's one year my senior at work.
ISHIDA: Seventeenth? Wow. Going over all those years of work history in detail would make for a long conversation, so I'll make it brief. My debut was on a simulation game called "REBUS", for which I worked on 3D CG animation. I studied design in college, but I also dabbled in computer graphics, which is how I found my way to Atlus. That was around the time when most games were shifting to 3D, so my timing was perfect. I hadn't studied illustrating, so I was no good at making sketches, but they gave me a shot anyway because of my experience with 3D graphics. I think the hiring standards were much more relaxed back then, so I just kind of fell into the position without much effort. (laughs) I started specializing in 3D, but what I really wanted to do at the time were 3D CG cutscenes.

And why was that?
ISHIDA: 3D CG cutscenes are more about animation, as they don't have a direct link to a game's gameplay segments, but I didn't join a game company to be a film director, of course. My boss at the time got pissed when I said, "I don't wanna do this." He said, "Fine. Have it your way," and made me the lead 3D character modeler on a title called "Maken X". (laughs) They didn't have a lot of staff at the time, and the company was really waiting for a big break, so it was kind of like, "Whatever. See what you can do with this." (laughs) So with barely any accomplishments to my name, I found myself serving as a team leader on my second project at the company. After "Maken X" was "Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne"

[hereinafter referred to as "Shin 3"]. After that I mostly worked on projects as the chief scenery artist, but I was also the chief designer on the "Raidou" series. That pretty much brings us to the present day.
DOI: Ishida-san, Ishida-san! You left out "Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey" [hereinafter referred to as "SJ"]! (laughs)
ISHIDA: Oh, you're right. I somehow forgot my most important title. (laughs) I was the overall director for "SJ", but this time around, with "Shin 4", I went back to being the art director.

Incidentally, what sort of work does an art director actually do?
ISHIDA: At the heart of every game is its gameplay and story, and it's the art director's job to judge whether or not the graphics and designs are going in a direction that fits those other essential elements.

Then what does the director do?
ISHIDA: The director oversees everything, including gameplay, story, music, and even promotional material. At our company, the director takes on a lot of tasks normally handled by a producer. The director has to think about how to market the game, negotiate for money with the company, manage production costs, and lots of other little details about the production.

So, basically someone who's in charge of everything?
ISHIDA: Exactly. The director handles everything about the game, and the art director judges everything about design.

Forgive me if this is out of line, but how did you suddenly come to be the director for "SJ"?
ISHIDA: It was because I wanted to try making a game all my own. When working on past titles, there were a lot of situations where I thought, "This isn't how I would choose to do it." But the fundamental goal was to work in the established direction, so even if my opinion sometimes differed, I had to keep quiet and move on. Games don't sell without everyone's cooperation. But that desire to make a game with gameplay that I personally envisioned grew stronger and stronger, so around the time of "Devil Summoner 2: Raidou Kuzunoha vs. King Abaddon" [hereinafter referred to as "King Abaddon"], I began seriously thinking about directing, and I even worked on proposals in my free time. I brought those proposals to the company and said that I'd like to try making a game.

And that led to "SJ"?
ISHIDA: Right. Well, there were three proposals total, and one of them was a new "Megami Tensei" title. That's the one that was chosen and wound up becoming "SJ". One of the others was for a remake of "Dungeon Master". (laughs) When they approved me - someone with no experience making a game from start to finish - for "SJ", I remember thinking that this must be a company with either deep pockets or a lot of grit. (laughs)
DOI: Or maybe just one that wanted to support someone taking on a challenge. (laughs)
ISHIDA: Then, when "SJ" was just about finished up, the plans for "Shin 4" started moving, with Kaneko-san at the helm and Yamai-kun as the director. I overheard that they needed a chief designer... Yamai-kun helped me out with the scenario for "SJ", so I decided to return the favor by volunteering to be the art director. That about sums up my 17-year-long career. (laughs)

You said you're not much for illustrating, Ishida-san, but were you just being modest?
ISHIDA: No, I really can't draw. (laughs) I can work up a mean storyboard, but there's nothing there you'd want the public to see. (laughs)
DOI: Really? I think your drawings have an interesting flavor to them. (laughs)
ISHIDA: I'm ashamed to say that what you've seen is really the best I can muster. (laughs) That's the best you'll get out of me.

So you did the storyboards for the animated scenes in "Shin 4", right Ishida-san?
ISHIDA: Yeah, I did all those.
DOI: We call those parts "cut anime" [short for "cutscene animation"]. Ishida-san did the storyboards, the artists worked up the necessary images, and then Ishida-san animated them together. Ishida-san oversaw everything to do with the animation.
ISHIDA: I've worked with animation storyboards since the demon debut cutscenes in "Shin Megami Tensei III: Nocturne Maniax" [hereinafter referred to as "Maniax"]. This time around I mostly focused on design supervision, so I originally wanted to outsource the storyboards and animation to a separate animation company. But the need for 3D and the unique nature of the content meant that we ended up having to do all that in-house.

Did the animation take a lot of time and effort?
ISHIDA: Indeed it did. It's no exaggeration to say that I spent most of my time with this game working on that. (laughs)
DOI: It wound up being Ishida-san's primary task.

Doi-san, could you tell us about your experiences up until "Shin 4"?
DOI: I was born on February 24th, 1976. My blood type is A. I was raised in Yokohama in Shinagawa Prefecture.

So you have the same birthday as Soejima-san, the character designer for "Persona 3" and "P4".
DOI: Yup. Well, not the same year. How'd you even know that? (laughs) Soejima-san was actually one of my first interviewers when I applied to Atlus.
ISHIDA: Huh? He was an interviewer way back then?
DOI: Yeah. My interviewers were Kaneko-san and Soejima-san.

That must have been... quite the intense interview. (laughs)
DOI: It was a real shock to me. (laughs) I was sitting there, waiting for my interview, and Kaneko-san came in and said, "Hi there." Yes, that Kaneko-san. I couldn't believe it. (laughs) It was a really interesting interview, but I was as nervous as could be. Afterward, I found myself appreciating Kaneko-san's tendency to... how do I put it... judge me hard without any mercy. (laughs)

So he was hard on you? (laughs)
DOI: Ahead of time, I'd submitted the assigned drawing of a horse and a landscape painting, but at the time, I really didn't like doing landscapes. Kaneko-san saw right through me at a glance and said, "You really don't like landscapes, do you?" (laughs)

So what do you think was the deciding factor in your hiring?
DOI: It think it's because, at the time, Soejima-san was looking for artists specializing in 2D art to work under him. So I had good timing with my application, and they chose me. I think that's how it went.

What was your first job after joining the company?
DOI: I joined right when production on "Persona 2: Innocent Sin" [hereinafter referred to as "Sin"] was starting, so they had me coloring character bust shots and designing the various cards, like the tarot cards. At the time, I was convinced it would be a corporate environment with a strong sense of hierarchy, and that I'd probably be stuck doing grunt work for that reason. I didn't think I would have anything to do with actual art for my whole first year, but I started working, did a coloring test, and they said, "Sin' has a lot of cards in it, so how about you try designing some of them?"

So it was kind of like how Ishida-san suddenly found himself being a director. (laughs)
DOI: But shortly afterward, the demand for 2D art dried up. Everything was switching to 3D, so I was like, "What'll happen to me?" (laughs) It was a real turning point.

Sounds like you were in a pinch. (laughs)
DOI: They said, "So what do you want to do?" I found myself worrying, but I agreed to try 3D. But if I was doing 3D, it wouldn t be characters, but rather my good old weak spot, backgrounds. I took on that challenge, though. I thought I could conquer my aversion to drawing backgrounds by doing the work. (laughs) That's when I worked on concept art for "Shin 3" with Ishida-san.
ISHIDA: Oh, right! I did do concept art for that one, didn't I? (laughs)
DOI: (laughs) In that way, they had me working on scenery pretty much up through the end of "King Abaddon". I was on the background design team for "Shin 3" as a sub-leader, which pretty much meant that I was supporting Ishida-san. I did similar work on "Maniax", "Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga", and "Digital Devil Saga 2", and I joined up again with Ishida-san for "Devil Summoner: Raidou Kuzunoha vs. The Soulless Army" [hereinafter referred to as "The Soulless Army"], which he was the art director for. I was the background design team leader starting with "Maniax", and on "The Soulless Army", I worked on bringing together the worldview, demanding a certain aesthetic, and implementing my own sense of aesthetics.

Would you say that the concept art in this book is a good example of those aesthetics?
DOI: Yes, very much so. Although it hasn't yet been published. (laughs)

Doi-san, you found yourself doing art soon after joining Atlus, but did you study art in college?
DOI: No. I majored in fashion design, so I had pretty much nothing to do with traditional, fine art.

Fashion!? So how did you find yourself at Atlus?
DOI: I graduated after two years at a vocational school for fashion, but I got a lung disease and wound up a jobless grad. Shortly afterward, the college hooked me up with a big-name clothing company.

Oh, so your first job was with them?
DOI: No. I was grateful for the tentative offer, but... I declined. More than anything, I wanted to get involved with video games. (laughs) I'd been a gamer since I was a kid, and I'd been fond of Atlus ever since I played "Megami

Tensei" in elementary school. So when I got that offer from the clothing company, I said to myself, "Nah, this just isn't right."
ISHIDA: Sounds like you were a troublesome student. (laughs)
DOI: It was like... "There must be a life beyond this blasted sewing machine..." (laughs)

So you didn't just design clothes - you actually made some of your own?
DOI: Of course. Fashion designers don't just come up with concepts. They draw up plans and create prototypes.

So you're a fashion character designer! An illustrator moonlighting as a tailor!
ISHIDA: Nothing to get that excited about. (laughs)
DOI: No no no no no. I'm not making clothes at this point. (laughs) I just remember doing it back then. Even the Samurai cosplay outfits for our booth were made through a collaboration between myself and an actual garment maker. During their production, I started interfering with aspects that a person in my role normally wouldn't, saying things like "I think these sleeves should be more like this," and making other requests. The garment maker said, "Wait, do you have a background in fashion?" (laughs) Everything proceeded smoothly after that.

Back to our original discussion, what titles did you work on after "The Soulless Army", Doi-san?
DOI: There was "King Abaddon", the "Trauma Center" series, "Trauma Team", the PSP version of "Persona 2: Eternal Punishment", and the Nintendo 3DS version of "Devil Summoner: Soul Hackers". "Trauma Center: Second Opinion" was where I really started being a character designer. From that point on, they consistently put me on the character design team.
ISHIDA: You also did "SJ"!
DOI: Oh yeah. (laughs) Why did we both forget about that one? (laughs)

How did you come to be involved with "SJ"?
DOI: I think it was right after "Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2". Development on that had just ended, and Ishida-san came to me about "SJ". Just a little "love call", asking if I would help him construct the worldview for his new game. (laughs) So I laid out the early sense of aesthetics for "SJ". I tried doing some drawings in the style of American comics and thought, "Wow, I'd really like to go in this direction." So as you can see, I've been involved in all sorts of titles leading up to "Shin 4".

Doi-san, can you tell us specifically about your work on "Shin 4", including your official duties?
DOI: The most obvious aspect of my work on "Shin 4" was character design. I drew the bust shots of all the characters. I also did the full-body shots for promotional material and the key visual illustrations. Then there was designing the equipment, overseeing the animation, and giving advice about the worldview. I played all sorts of roles, but officially, I was the "character designer".

There's no doubt that you're a dedicated character designer, so what do you focus on when designing those characters of yours?
DOI: There are all sorts of things, but mainly I try to think about how to "communicate the artist's intention". That is, showing everything about the characters' backstories and personalities through visual cues. For example, the "Trauma Center" series is full of doctor characters, so it wouldn't do to have designs that don't look like doctors. There are a few basic points that you need to cover to really communicate that intention. Once that's done, you can have fun giving them extra details or including some kind of message.

Thank you both. I think our readers have a good idea about who the two of you are now. Moving on, let's talk about the development of "Shin 4". Although the game does, for the most part, feel quintessentially "MegaTen", there are many ways in which it differs from other games in the series. How did those differences come about?
DOI: That's right... I think it's because the director, Yamai-san, pushed the idea that "imitating past games isn't good enough". Going after the quintessential series feel is fine, but we had to bring something original to the table as well.
ISHIDA: At first, we weren't even going to meet the earlier titles in the series halfway or pay tribute at all. "Shin Megami Tensei", "Shin Megami Tensei II", and "Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne" all looked really different, and with each new release, players inevitably said, "No, this is different," but after a few years, they come to see each entry as distinctly MegaTen-esque. With that consistent reaction in mind, we consciously tried to steer away from a mere imitation or half-assed tribute. There are a lot of movie remakes nowadays that aim to be spiritual successors, but I think the ones everyone remembers are the ones that try to do something different and adapt to the times. The poorly-done remakes inevitably flop. (laughs) So what really mattered was just not losing that essential "soul" of the series.
DOI: As with any long-running series, most of the original staff is gone by the time you get to the fourth entry. So you're going to see something fresh in the character designs, demon designs, music, etc. Those differences are inevitable, so what we actually struggled with was aiming for that MegaTen-esque quality. If the way that's done is by modeling it after past games, then it's still going to come out differently because the staff has changed. It'll be a copy at best and an inferior version at worst. "Shin 4" was the product of us aiming not for a remake of past titles, but just for that "-esque" quality.
ISHIDA: From the start, Kaneko-san - who started the series - said, "Why don't we just call 'SJ' 'Shin 4'?" He's never been the type to say, "MegaTen has to be like this and this only." Oddly enough, he's never that particular, and he's always ready to scrap everything that's come before. Every time, it's like, let's start fresh! At first we were all pretty nervous about having the games adhere to all the MegaTen standards, and it was kind of restrictive. But he raised us to realize that's not a bad thing as long as it just guides the direction you go in and nothing more. That's why "Shin 4" wasn't such a struggle.

I see. It's interesting that you say he "raised" you. Moving on, can each of you tell us about the parts of this game you were in charge of that you really like or were really satisfied with?
ISHIDA: That's a tough one. With "SJ", besides the back-and-forth with Kaneko-san, I was really given the freedom to do what I wanted, so there were a lot of those satisfying "Bam!" moments. (laughs) But I took a step back for "Shin 4" as the lead designer; I was mostly following the director's orders. As someone who has already experienced what being a director is like, there were pretty much none of those "Bam!" moments this time around. (laughs)
DOI: Not at all? (laughs)
ISHIDA: Not at all! (laughs) Although, it's true that I was going for that sort of... augmented or virtual reality feel for the interface from the beginning. Like a car's GPS system. The

AR feeling really comes through when you're communicating with the machine, but then you also have this secondary information being projected. I think that supplementing the gameplay with that sort of "technology" and allowing the player to role-play in a way that's not possible in real life is an important aspect of MegaTen. Using the visuals to enhance that atmosphere is key. The "Gauntlet" displays that secondary information to the character - information that other characters can't see - and by relying on that, the player can do amazing things that ordinary people can't do. I think the graphics enhance the atmosphere like that. There was a similar concept going on in "SJ", but according to feedback for this game, we managed to take it a step further in "Shin 4".
DOI: There were a lot of satisfying parts for me, but what was really critical for me was when the players gave me exactly the response I was looking for with regard to the Samurai uniforms and the hairstyle designs. (laughs) Another standout part for me was the key visual I did that was used for the packaging. That's got to be one of the grandest illustrations I've drawn to date. The point of a key visual is to, in a single image, communicate the whole worldview and how it connects to the characters. So when the players and people in other departments said that seeing that image changed how they saw "Shin 4", that made me really happy.
ISHIDA: As I remember it, even everyone in our office would get really excited when they knew you were about to put out a new image, Doi-kun.
DOI: But I was always so worried! (laughs) Up until the very end, Yamai-san would tell me, "Hurry up and find your self-confidence." (laughs) "Your nerves will vanish as soon as you show everyone what you've got, but I know they're all going to like whatever it is." But that message never reached me. (laughs) I was confident about some parts, but I was still nervous, and it didn't seem right to give the players something that was made while I was feeling so lost and worried. I just had to tell myself to hold my head high and keep on trying. ...Not that doing that got rid of my nerves. (laughs) I kept worrying up until we saw the final product, and I was feeling that pressure even as the game shipped.

"Shin 4" turned out to be a big hit, and both of you were instrumental in designing the game's visuals. With such a success behind the two of you, what are your hopes and ambitions going forward?
DOI: I think Ishida-san wants to make a new game. Right? (laughs)
ISHIDA: I'm going to be director a... gain. (laughs)

Is this an official proclamation?
ISHIDA: Well... if possible. (laughs) But with a whole new IP... not like what I'm working on now, which is riding on the "Megami Tensei" series' coattails, but a new series that I create myself. I'd like to direct something like that.
DOI: Why not a new series, but one that's still under the "Megami Tensei" name? (laughs) But a whole new IP would definitely be alluring. Not a sequel in any way, but a game where it's like, "It all starts here!" I'd be thrilled if something like that became a big hit.

I see. Quite the ambition, Ishida-san. How about you, Doi-san?
DOI: How about just "drawing background scenery now and then"? (laughs)

But at E3, people started forming a line to get your autograph an hour and a half before the event even started. The fans want more of your characters, Doi-san.

DOI: E3 really was so gratifying. But yeah. I should keep on designing characters. After the good reception I got with "Shin 4", I know expectations are high, so I'd like to take a proactive role and get involved with another new title in the "Megami Tensei" series. I know there are still all sorts of challenges awaiting me out there.

Oh! I'm sure you've just piqued a lot of our readers' interests. Thank you! Finally, any closing messages for the readers of this book?
ISHIDA: Oh, right... A closing message...
DOI: Gramps here is all tired out. (laughs)
ISHIDA: No, I'm fine. (laughs) This book is meant as a supplementary reader for the game, so I think it's best read after playing through the game. If reading the book piques your interest, go ahead and play "Shin Megami Tensei IV" one more time. Finally - and this is important - the people involved with this game's creation all had their own interpretations in mind while working on it, and there are plenty of spots where we didn't agree. I've written and spoken a lot about my own thoughts, and I think players can find the true answer within their own thoughts and feelings if they play the game one more time with the creators' stances in mind.

But Ishida-san, doesn't what you've written in this book technically constitute the "official" interpretation?
ISHIDA: I'm definitely not saying, "Anything written in this book is official and correct!" It's much better to give players the freedom to imagine things how they want to. It's the same with movies, right? If a director came out and said, "This scene means this!" that'd be really boorish. (laughs) Once art is made public, it belongs to the consumer, and the consumer should be free to interpret it however he or she wants.
DOI: I agree with Ishida-san. I think the comments in this book are mostly useful for pointing out things the players might not have realized, which then guides them to find their own answers about "Shin 4". Hopefully, this book will enhance the experience the game can provide. Then, those satisfied players can show the book to friends unfamiliar with the game and inspire them to give "Shin 4" a try, thereby expanding the game's reach.
ISHIDA: Sounds like you're proselytizing. (laughs)
DOI: Huh!? Proselytizing? Ah... I'm not necessarily telling the readers to go out and spread the word of enlightenment, but just that if they want to, this book would definitely come in handy. (laughs)

Thank you both for your time. (laughs)

"Samurai" Outfits

The Samurai outfits worn by the protagonist and Isabeau. They're not merely consistent with the in-game versions on a visual level; even the materials used to make them were selected with attention to detail.

ART GALLERY

Comments by Masayuki Doi

"SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV" KEY VISUAL

The concept behind this key visual - which also served as the package art - was to encapsulate everything that the game is about in a single image. In the center you have the protagonist, who will decide his own fate. He is flanked by Jonathan and Walter, who each symbolize the opposing routes. The stances and positions of the main characters, angels, and demons hint at the relationships between them. The protagonist strikes a cool, heroic pose, staring straight ahead. The giant hands gripping Jonathan and Walter are meant to be those of Merkabah and Lucifer, respectively, who show up near the end. This represents how Jonathan and Walter are charmed by the forces of law and chaos, respectively, and end up as the vanguard for their respective camps. They're both ready to give up their own bodies for their causes, and Jonathan agonizes over the fact that sacrifices will have to be made in order to build his ideal world of law. (laughs) On the other hand, Walter is undaunted and in high spirits. I wanted to give the impression that he's overplaying it. With the angels and demons, I picked the most representative members from among the new characters on each side. On a technical level, although most of my illustrations are done in animation cel style, I challenged myself to do this one with heavy brush techniques in order to fit with the "MegaTen" series' image and worldview. Yamai-san had never even seen any brush-style images from me, but he nevertheless gave me the go-ahead, hoping for something like this. (laughs)

COVER OF THE OCTOBER 4TH, 2012 ISSUE OF WEEKLY FAMITSU

I made this illustration when Famitsu asked us for a cover image to coincide with the game's official announcement. Of the six images included here, this is the first one I created. As it would be the world's first glimpse of the game, there was a lot of discussion with the development team about what sort of themes to include. The concept we decided on was to show the players that this game would have a different flavor than past "MegaTen" entries. Something fresh. Narrowing it down to just three characters and using a simple, animated-looking style was a good way to plainly communicate this change to the magazine's readers. Composition-wise, the protagonist's pose - with the Gauntlet thrust out, drawing the eye - is meant to show that players would decide their own fates using the Gauntlet's power. As early in development as this image was, there are still subtle hints of the division between the law and chaos routes. The law-favoring Jonathan on the right and the chaos-supporting Walter on the left foreshadow the choices that will have to be made. They embody, to some degree, "right wing" conservatism and the "left wing" belief in the power of reform, almost to a religious extent. Even their coloring references the trend in past games to mark law as blue and chaos as red. As for the background, even though the details of Mikado and Tokyo were still secret at this point, we wanted to include as a promotional concept the idea of one world divided in two. So we have the white world on top and the dark world down below.

COVER OF THE JUNE 6TH, 2013 ISSUE OF WEEKLY FAMITSU

A commission for the cover of the Famitsu issue that coincided with the game's release. As this issue of the magazine was released on the same day as the game, the illustration had to be similar to the key visual in how it represented "Shin Megami Tensei IV" while also contrasting that key visual. Whereas the key visual shows the cool protagonist bravely standing against the cruelty of fate, this illustration has fate toying with the protagonist outright. So it borrows a lot from the key visual while adding both Lilith and Gabriel, who are integral to the overall route choice. The protagonist's left hand is bound by chains while his right is bound by thorny vines. This of course shows how each side is trying to drag the protagonist into supporting their cause. Throughout the series, angels have often been represented as being inorganic or even mechanical - hence the chains - while the more organic, seductive demonic side would be associated with something like thorns. Jonathan and Walter are drawn to focus on the possibility that they might split from the protagonist. Whereas Jonathan silently bears the pain of this separation, Walter joins the chaos side, saying something like "I won't forget you." You can see the sadness in his eyes, as much as he tries to hide it with a warped grimace. The composition and expressions are all meant to indicate how the protagonist is at the very center of this story.

SPECIAL PRE-ORDER BONUS "SOUND AND ART COLLECTION"

A booklet-style illustration that came as a pre-order bonus. I agonized a whole lot about what sort of illustration the consumers who pre-ordered the game would want to receive. The idea came to me when I thought it would be fun to have official artwork showing the protagonists not in their usual Samurai outfits, but rather in Tokyo-style clothing. I went with Isabeau because she hadn't had much exposure at that point and because I felt like including a female presence after a ton of illustrations with nothing but guys. (laughs) In this image, we can imagine that she's staring into a mirror or even at the player. She's just not sure whether the Tokyo clothing suits her. She picked the cutest outfit she could find (laughs) and, in a kind of embarrassed way, is asking the mirror or the player whether she looks good like that. Her outfit is meant to be leather, with a knit material for the sleeve openings, collar, and shoulders. The protagonist is wearing an outfit that's obtainable in the game. The "Shibuya" text on the AR display shows you that they're in Tokyo, and the AR display itself indicates that the Gauntlet is active. Showing the Gauntlet's screen would have been awkward in this composition, so I just included the green light to get the point across.

COVER OF THE JULY 2013 ISSUE OF DENGEKI NINTENDO

A commission for the cover of Dengeki Nintendo. After analyzing and considering the magazine's readership, I decided to go with a heroic, action-oriented illustration. I wanted the game's dramatic nature to be immediately obvious and not just realized after deep reflection. I went for a visual with presence and a theme of "motion". The protagonist, Isabeau, and Yamato Takeru are clearly facing down some enemy. The protagonist and Isabeau aren't arranged collage-style but rather like they're actually about to dash forward and cut something up. Making the heroic Yamato Takeru their demon friend seemed like the right choice, as he was a new demon with little exposure (at the time) who eventually befriends the protagonist in a way. I also just personally like how Yamato Takeru looks and wanted to try drawing him. (laughs) The scattered green lights are meant to recall Magnetite, the living energy substance in past entries. Magnetite doesn't make an appearance in this game, but I thought it made sense for Magnetite and demons to have some sort of vague connection. The light surrounding Yamato Takeru shows him as a summoned demon as opposed to a real one.

OFFICIAL ARTWORKS COVER

The key visual and the Famitsu cover (the June 6th, 2013 one) initially formed a duology, but when I got the offer to do this cover, it became a trilogy (laughs), and this is the final entry. The theme here is "birth". In the game, four waves of humanity have been destroyed, and the protagonist was born to bear the fate of humanity's fifth wave. The goddess of Tokyo herself asks the protagonist to save the world. Then you have Merkabah and Lucifer, who symbolize the angels and demons respectively. I thought, "Why not try to cram all of that into a single illustration?" The naked protagonist in the center symbolizes the whole birth and "creation of the world" angle. Nakedness is often used as a motif in ancient religious paintings, right? That seemed to fit with the world of "MegaTen", so I went ahead and stripped him down. (laughs) Burroughs was originally designed by Stephen to resemble the goddess of Tokyo, so it's fitting that, as a guiding presence for the protagonist and the embodiment of the goddess, she symbolizes the neutral route. I think that by including Burroughs, Merkabah, and Lucifer, I've sufficiently hinted at all of the possible routes that one can follow. The four crosses symbolize the four destroyed waves of humanity - in other words, the White. The fact that Lucifer's hand extends into the area where the crosses are might suggest that he's somehow involved with those destroyed humans. Pretty dramatic, huh?

"Shin Megami Tensei IV" key visual

Special pre-order bonus "Sound and Art Collection"

Cover of the October 4th, 2012 issue of Weekly Famitsu

Cover of the July 2013 issue of Dengeki Nintendo

Cover of the June 6th, 2013 issue of Weekly Famitsu

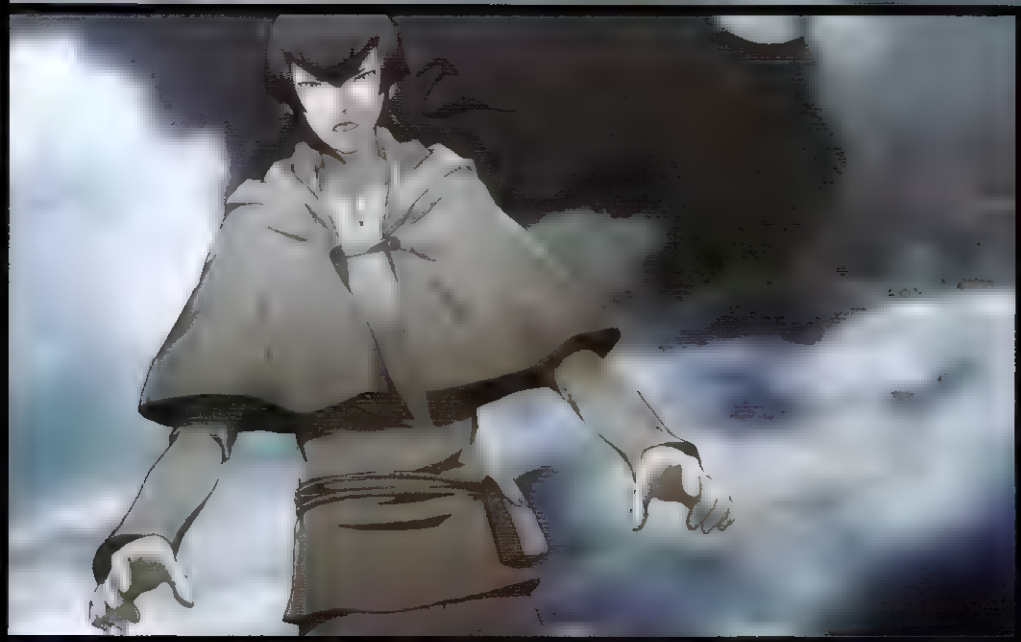
Collaboration illustration by Hideo Minaba

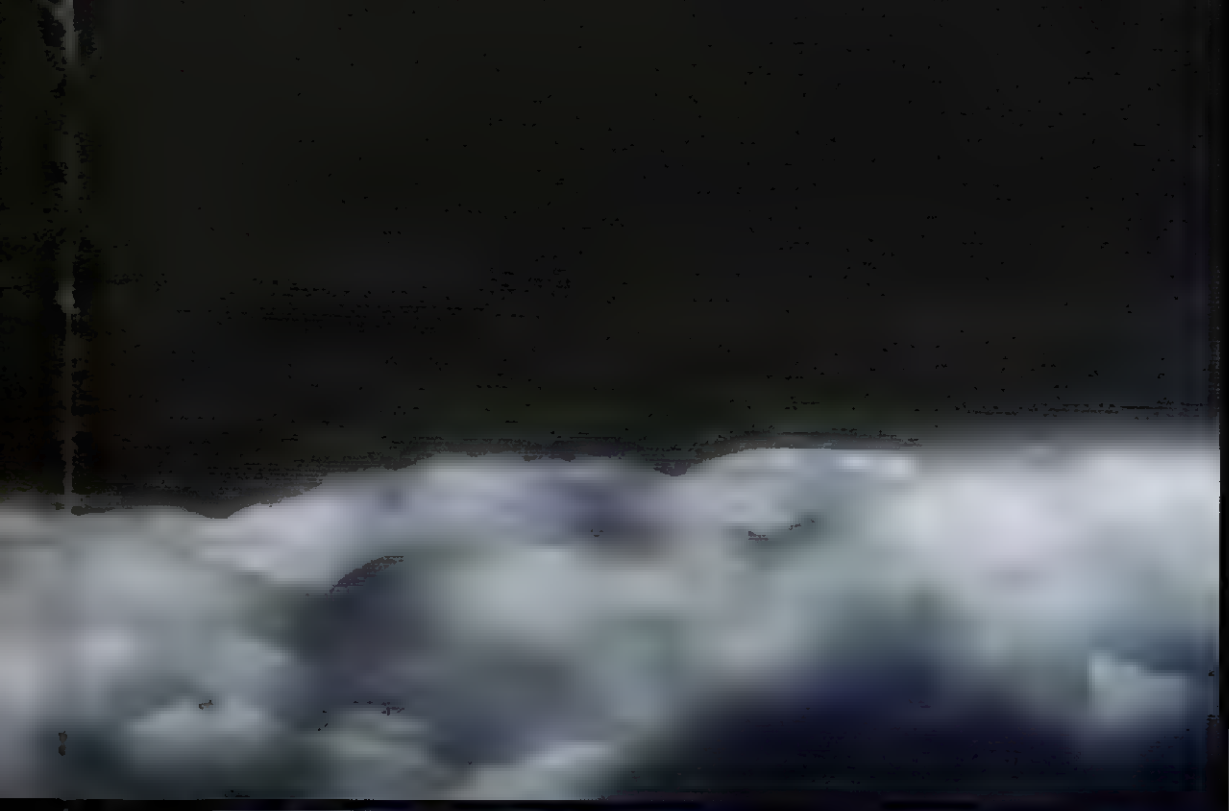
Collaboration illustration by Tomomi Kobayashi

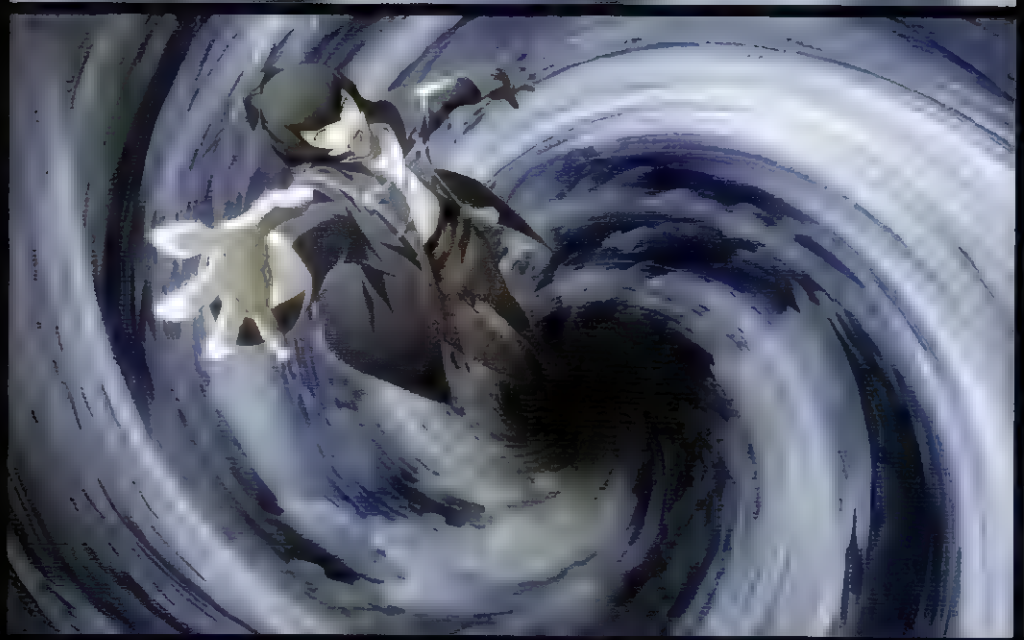
Collaboration illustration by Katsumi Enami

Collaboration illustration by Mutsumi Inomata

Opening 1







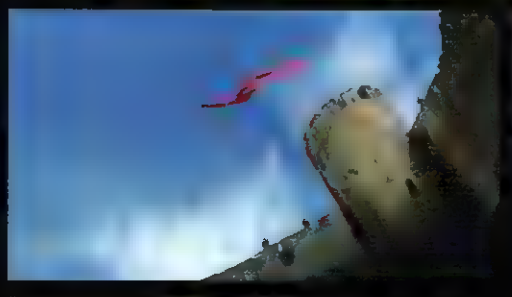
ISHIDA: Opening I starts with a dive into a sea of clouds, viewed from behind the protagonist. The fact that so much of the game is seen from behind the protagonist's back is all for the sake of player subjectivity… in other words, the idea that the game is played from the player's point of view by fostering empathy or by making the player feel like he or she is actually experiencing the world. I wanted to shift to a more objective viewpoint for the animation sequences, and the game's opening follows that general rule pretty closely. It's very easy to make the player feel like part of the world when you use a subjective viewpoint. At first, we were going to use very dynamic motion graphics for these cutscenes. But with too much motion, they cease to be mere bridges between different parts of the gameplay and start to stand alone. All that extreme movement would just get in the way of trying to immerse the player, so we made every effort to eliminate the motion we had planned on initially. In order to not destroy the other aspects of the experience, we filled every scene layout with as much emotion as possible while making sure the protagonist himself didn't emote too much. Although I was responsible for compiling the animations in this game, I fundamentally prefer when games tell their stories through gameplay rather than cutscenes - and for that all-important "experience" component, a subjective viewpoint is much better than an objective one.

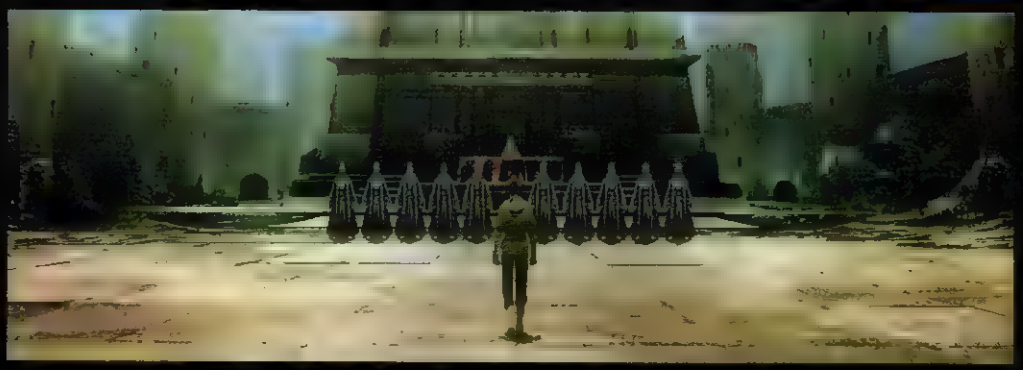
Opening 2

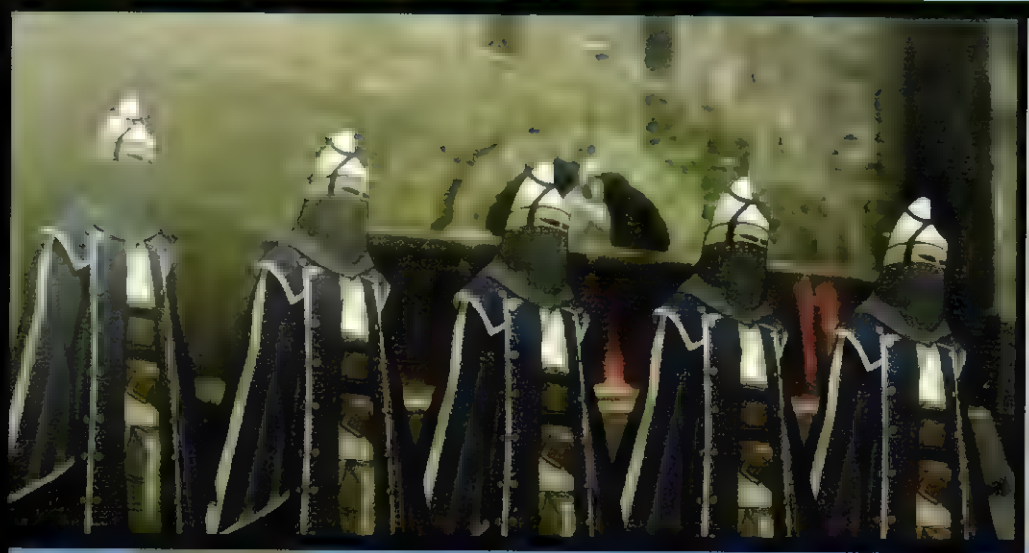
ISHIDA: Opening 2 starts at Mikado Castle and gradually pulls away. But the distance that the camera pulls back kept increasing, and this led to a problem. We had all these buildings perfectly laid out for the close shot, but as the camera zoomed out they became smaller and smaller and we needed to fill in their surroundings with appropriate detail. Every increase in the zoom-out distance meant we needed more surrounding background, so I got used to the designer I had asked to take care of that giving me a face that pleaded, "Really? Again...?" (laughs) The camera also changes elevation as it moves, and we were originally also going to have perspective changes. But we dealt with it like an optical illusion, and that cleverly concealed any inconsistencies.

DOI: The zoom-out in this scene was made even better thanks to the 3DS's special characteristics. The scene's sense of depth made good use of the 3D effect, and having the closer scenery suddenly appear and actually seem close is something that only the 3DS could do.

ISHIDA: With this scene and several others, I really hope that players turn the 3D effects on when viewing them. We took twice the time to render both the right and left eye perspectives, so if the 3D is off, you'll only see the left eye perspective and the statue won't appear quite as it was intended to.







In-game Animation

Gauntlet Rite

ISHIDA: This cutscene features Aquila Statue Plaza just before the rite takes place, and it's my favorite cutscene in the game for how well it matches the player's state of mind to what's happening on the screen. As the nervous protagonist approaches the line of Samurai, his footsteps gradually turn into the sound of his heart beating. Because this was a scene I really wanted to get right, I asked them to make it run especially long. It's so long that I probably seem really self-important. (laughs) Anyway, my goal was for the protagonist's and the player's heartbeats to sync up.

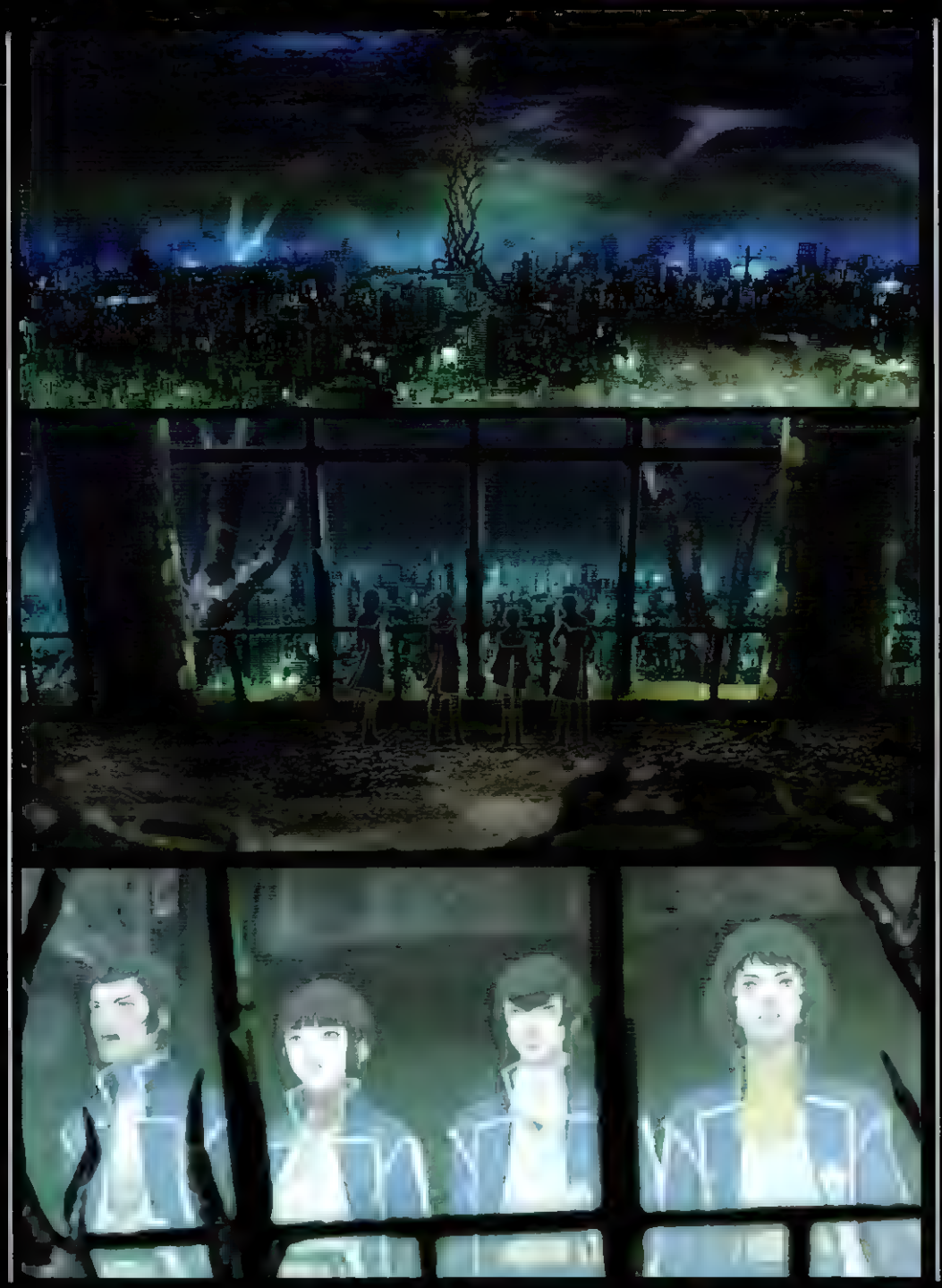
In-game Animation

Protagonist Close-up

DOI: To emphasize the importance of eyes in "Shin 4", I actually included detailed lighting in irises throughout the game. Characters' irises are finely detailed like this in nearly every image, but you'd be forgiven for not noticing it most of the time. Of course, having detailed irises alone doesn't accomplish much, but I had a hang-up about emphasizing eyes. I think my efforts paid off, though, as these eyes were used almost emblematically in the trailer. (laughs)

In-game Animation

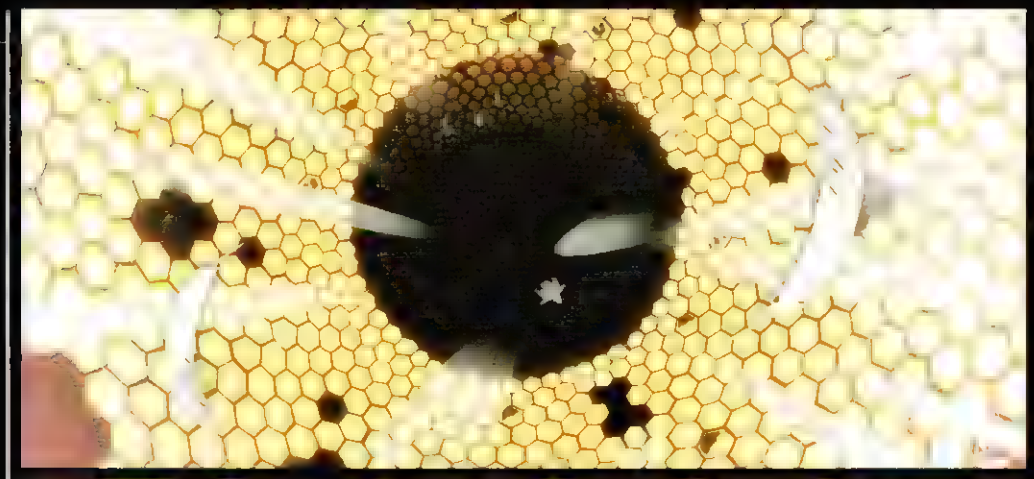
Sky Tower

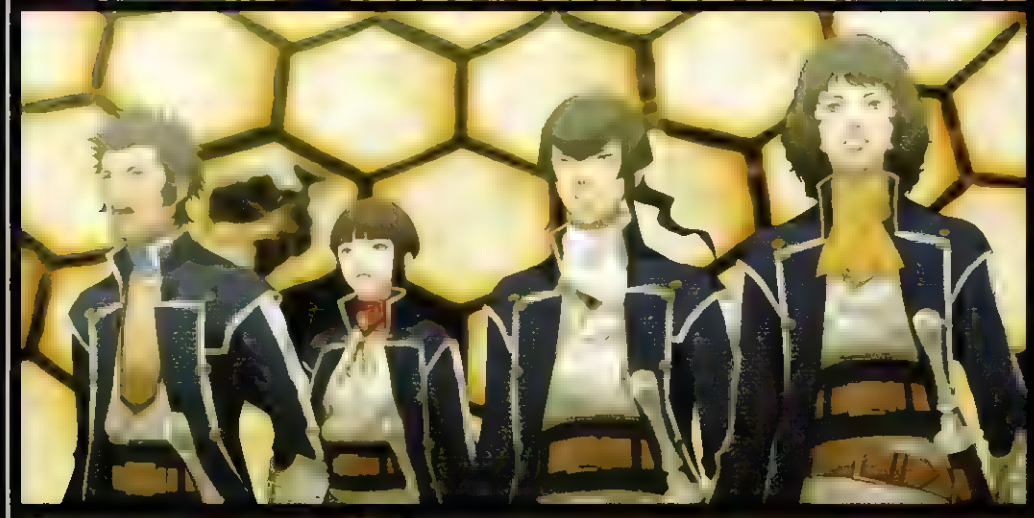


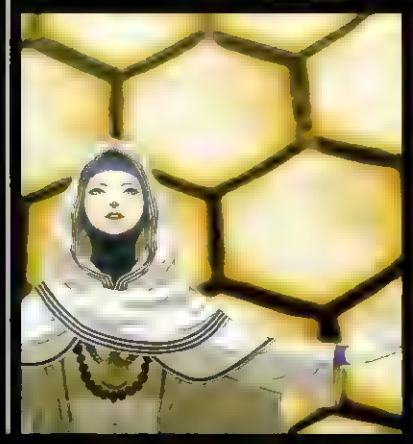
In-game Animation

Angels

DOI: This scene gave the art staff a lot of trouble, because drawing bird's-eye views is just plain hard. Mess it up and it'll look like the characters have tiny legs. (laughs) On a related note... During the Gauntlet Rite, when the protagonist is looking at the Gauntlet's screen, the art staff was having problems. So I recreated the pose, took a picture, and gave it to them to use as reference. (laughs) The abundance of weird angles in the animated parts frustrated the staff to no end. Incidentally, when they started working on these scenes, only a small number of my illustrations were even finished. But problems with the production schedule meant that they had to move on with the animation anyway, and I know how much they struggled.

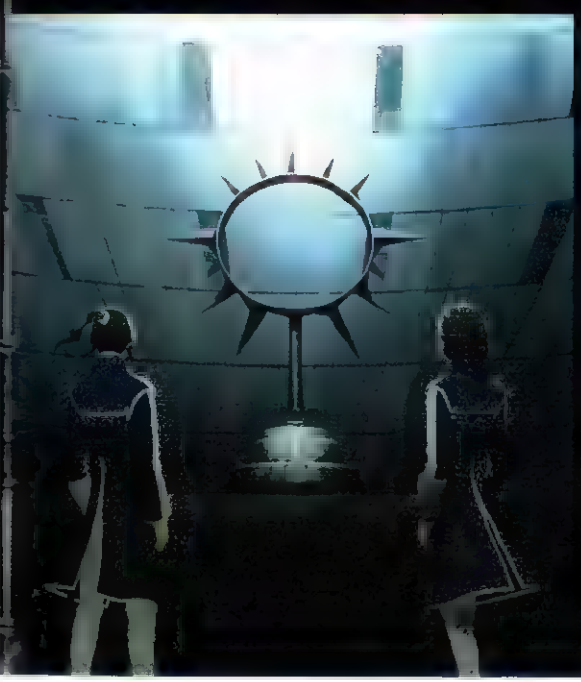






In-game Animation

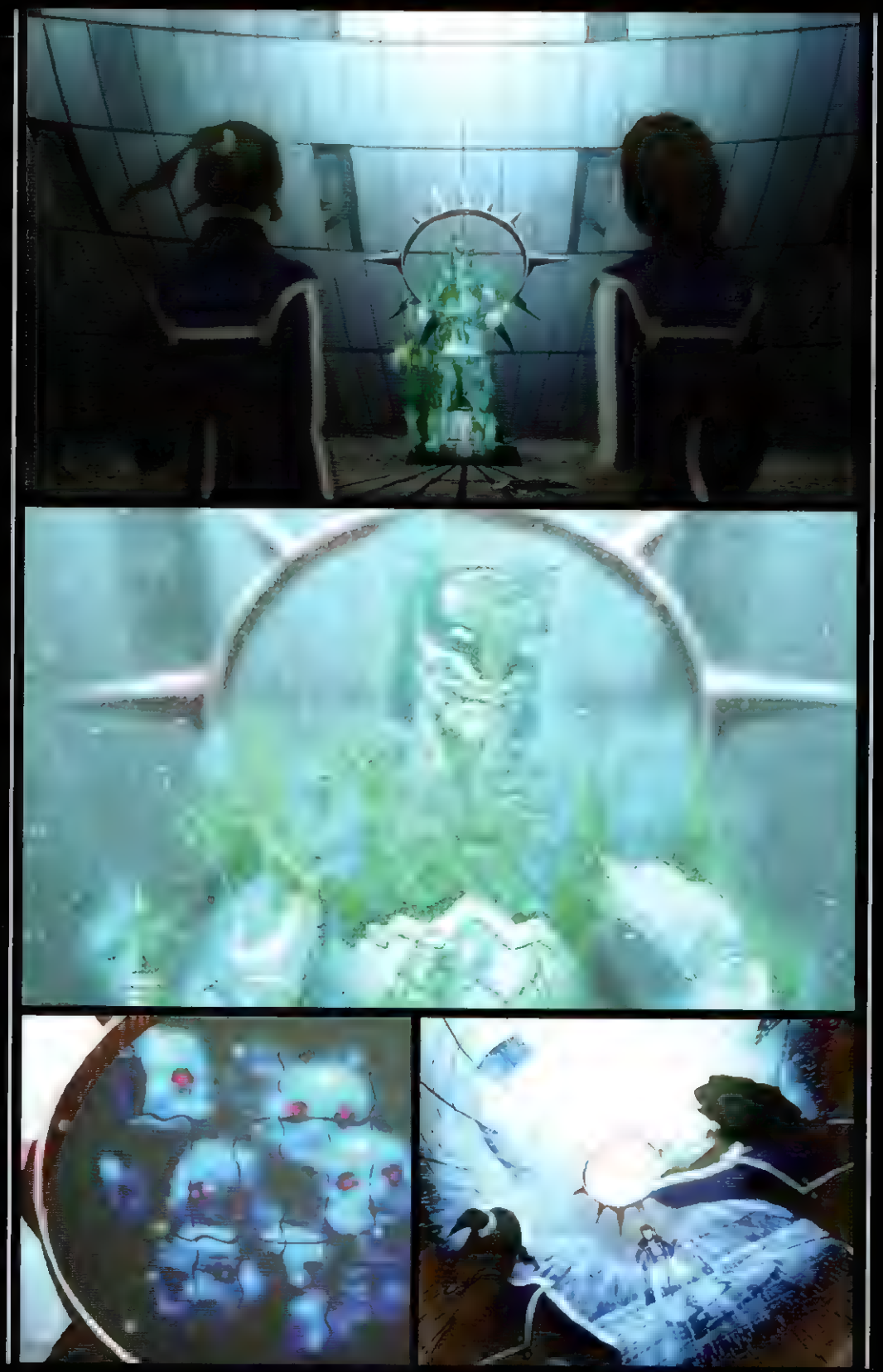
Jonathan and Walter

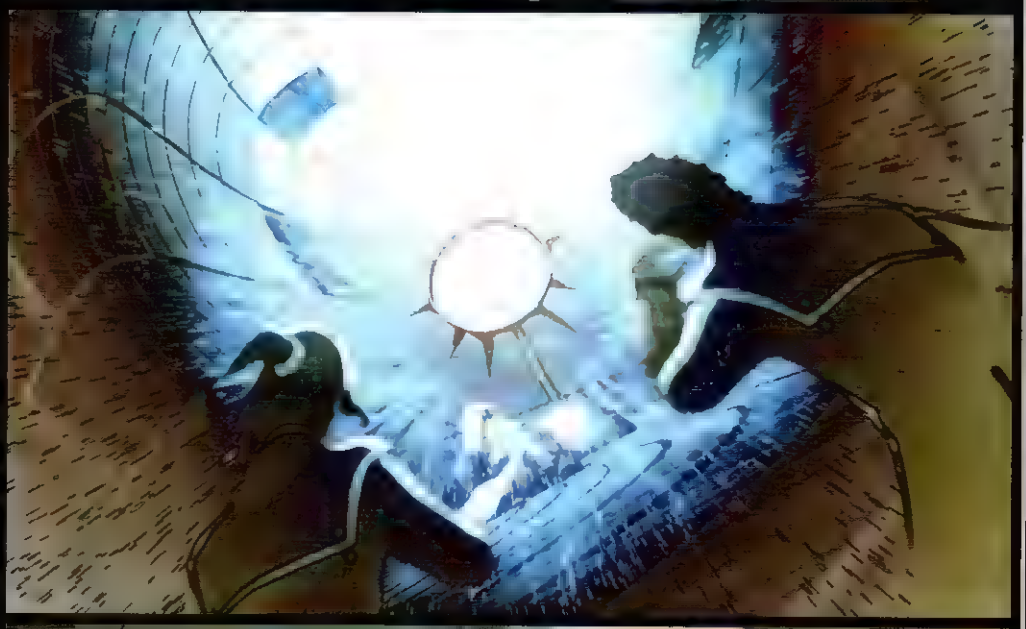


In-game Animation I

Yamato Perpetual Reactor

Yamato Perpetual Reactor: Low Route





Yamato Perpetual Reactor: Chaos Route

DOI: As the director of the whole project, Yamai would sometimes come to us with requests about the art. He would take a look at the images and tell us what sort of impression a specific character should be giving the player. At first, we had Tayama silent and eerily grinning in this scene. But Yamai said, "Shouldn't Tayama seem bolder here? Maybe bursting out with a more characteristic big laugh? Because here, he's thinking 'I'm not scared of you guys, because I've got Yamato Takeru on my side.' A big laugh would show that inner confidence, no?" So we changed his expression. Although the scary-looking Tayama still kind of made it into the game in a roundabout way. (laughs)

ISHIDA: Right. The second trailer had him wearing that initial expression. (laughs) The request from Yamai came after that trailer was released. Plenty of people saw the trailer, but I wonder how many wound up noticing the change. (laughs)

In-game Animation

Neutral Route 1

In-game Animation

Neutral Route 2

ISHIDA: This scene, which happens right before the neutral route ending, was the toughest of all. Long cutscenes are always rough.

DOI: Scenes 1 and 2 here were originally combined into one, but they had to be split. They were shockingly long, and they required an absurd number of images! (laughs) I happened to be in charge of the character parts for these animated scenes, which meant I was generally responsible for allocating the work to the different artists, but there was just too much to deal with here. (laughs) In the end, I threw myself at Ishida-san's mercy, saying "What do I do about this huge workload!?" (laughs)

ISHIDA: So we decided to split it between us. Because we were sharing responsibility for the cutscenes, whenever we came across a really tough one, we'd say, "How about we share this bit here? Oh, and this one?" There was a lot of economizing like that. (laughs) For example, we used the same shot of the protagonist's group in both the Sky Tower scene (when they're looking out at Tokyo in amazement) and the scene when they're looking at the descending angels in shock... We inadvertently saved some money that way. (laughs)

DOI: There were a few other places where that shot was casually thrown in, and I didn't notice at first. It was like, "When did that happen?" (laughs)

ISHIDA: Really? You may be right. (laughs) Like the "Protagonist Close-up"... I guess it became a generic, all-purpose cut that was good for saving some money. (laughs)

DOI: For sure. (laughs) For those out there who haven't seen these scenes in 3D, you should go back and view them again while looking for our special economized, reused parts. That was the real goal here...

ISHIDA: That's right. However we have to do it, we want to get all you readers out there who normally keep the 3D off to view these scenes in 3D!

Official Artworks cover

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV: Official Artworks

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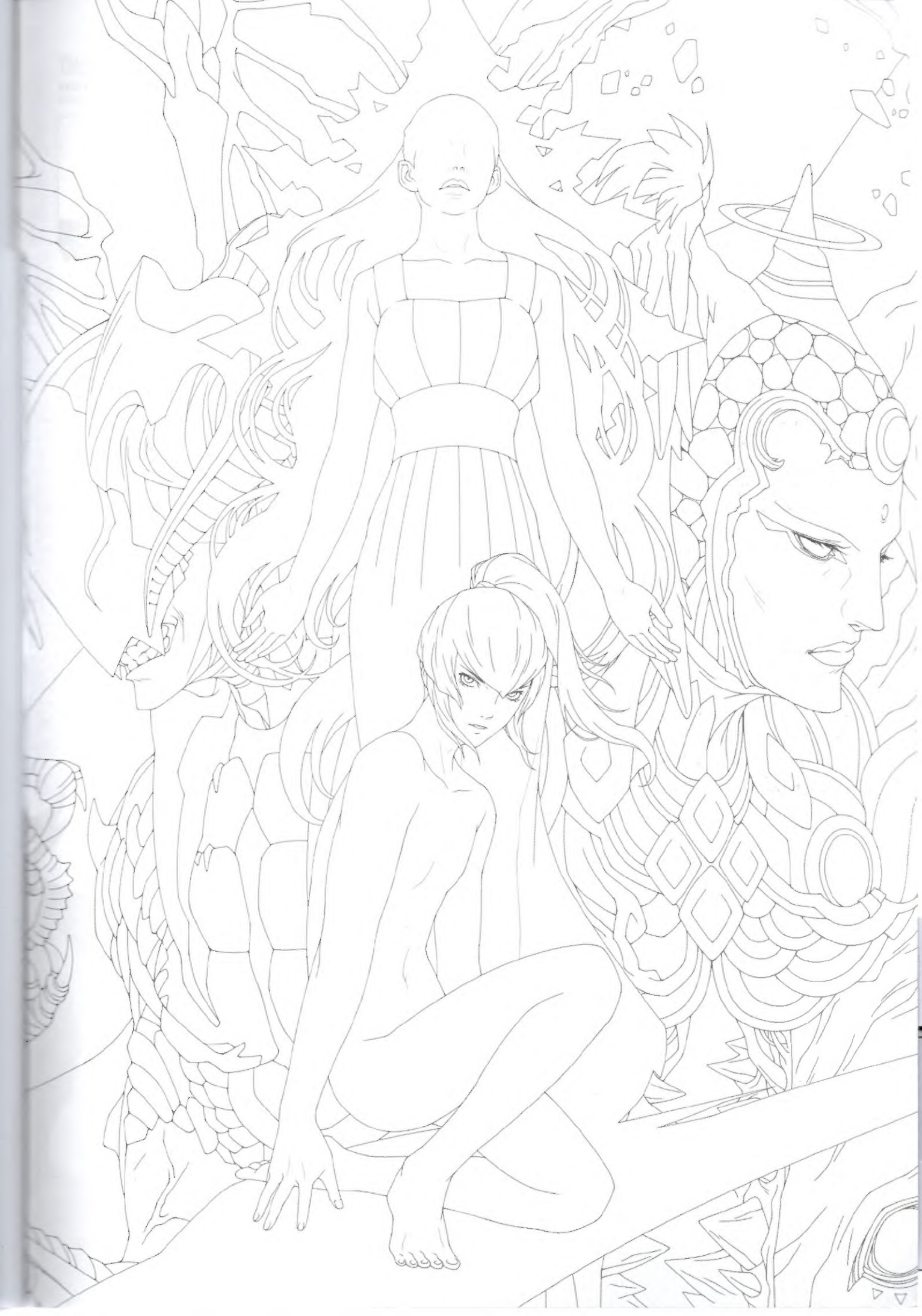

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV
Official Artworks

In *SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV*, samurai clash with demons and feudalism meets the futuristic in a post-apocalyptic world. *SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI IV: OFFICIAL ARTWORKS* collects the gorgeous imagery behind this critically-acclaimed RPG for the Nintendo 3DS. Inside you'll find character designs, backgrounds, demon designs, rough concepts, creator commentary, and more!

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